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THE FORTUNES

OF

COLONEL TORLOGH O'BRIEN

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A Tale of

THE WARS OF KING JAMES

BY

J. SHERIDAN LE FANU

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LIMITED
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THE FORTUNES

OF

COLONEL TORLOGH O'BRIEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAGIC MIRROR.

In the summer of the year 1686, at about ten o'clock at night, two scenes were passing, very different in all the accidents of place, plot, and personage; and which although enacted, the one in London, and the other near it, yet exercised an influence upon the events and persons of our Irish story, so important and so permanent, that we must needs lift the curtain from before the magic mirror, which every author, in virtue of his craft, is privileged to consult, and disclose for a minute the scenery and forms which flit across its mystic surface.

Look, then, reader, into the wondrous speculum, and behold a handsome saloon, richly furnished in the fashion of those days. The walls are hung with gorgeous tapestry, and against them stand curiously carved cabinets, stored with their loads of precious china and other treasures of art; luxurious sofas, and massive chairs and tables, covered with splendid cloths, occupy the floor, which shows in the intervals between this rich profusion of furniture, the deep pile of a Turkey carpet, spreading its soft and gaudy texture over the boards, and evidencing a degree of luxury not always then to be found, even in the mansions of the wealthiest nobles of a profuse and voluptuous court.

Large pictures, in magnificent carved and gilded frames, hang upon the walls; and at the far end of the chamber, from the lofty ceiling to the floor descend the rich folds of damask draperies, through which, and through the open windows from whose architraves they hang, is seen the River Thames, shimmering in the uncertain moonlight—gliding onward in his eternal course, and reflecting in his ever-moving mirror, the glow of forges, and the warm fire-light of snug citizens at jovial supper, or, perchance, the solitary red glimmer that twinkles from the poor student's attic—all which, and hundreds more, countless as the stars on high, his waters catch as they flow under the dark banks opposite in broad and silent flood.

In the chamber into which we are looking, there burns a large lamp, which sheds through its stained-glass sphere a soft, rose-coloured light on all the objects which surround it; and eight wax lights, flaring and flickering in the wanton evening breeze which floats lightly in at the open windows, lend an additional distinctness to the forms that occupy the room.

These are four in number: two lean over a table, which stands near the window, and seem to be closely examining a map, which nearly covers the board over which they stoop—the one sharp-featured, sallow, somewhat slovenly in his attire, his short cloak hanging from his shoulder, and his high-crowned hat (then an obsolete fashion) dangling in his hand, leans over the outspread plan, and with eager gestures and rapid enunciation, and yet with a strange mixture of deference, appears to harangue his listening companion. *He* is a strong, square-built man, somewhat, perhaps, beyond the middle age, gravely and handsomely dressed—his huge perriwig swings forward as he bends over and rests his chin upon his jewelled hand, and fixes upon the chart before him a countenance bold and massive, in which the lines of strong sense and sensuality are strikingly combined.

Pacing to and fro, and sometimes pausing half abstractedly at this table, looking for a moment at the outspread paper, and betraying the absence, and, perhaps, the agitation of his mind by his wandering gaze and the restless drumming of his knuckles on the table; then turning again to resume his rapid walk across the floor, and stealing occasionally a hurried and uneasy look towards a figure who sits alone upon a sofa in the obscurest part of the chamber, is seen a man of commanding stature and lofty mien, though somewhat tending to corpulence, richly dressed in a suit of dark velvet, sparkling with jewels, his neckcloth and ruffles fluttering with splendid point, having in his countenance a certain character of haughty command, according well with the high pretensions of his garb.

Another figure remains to be described, it is that toward which the regards of him we have just examined are so often turned: the form is that of a female, seated, as we have said, upon a sofa, and wrapped in a close travelling cloak, the hood of which falls over her face, so that excepting that she is tall, and possesses hands and feet of singular beauty and slimness, we can pronounce nothing whatever of her *personnel*—she is evidently weeping, her dress shows the vibration of every sob, and the convulsive clasping of her small hands, and the measured beating of her tiny foot upon the floor, betoken her inward anguish.

While thus they are engaged, upon the broad bosom of the river, under the silver moonlight, with gay torches glowing, and, no doubt, plentiful store of laughing masks, and sweet swell of floating music (for those nearest the window turn and seem to listen), glides by the royal pageant—the court of St. James's on the water—the royal barges passing on their way; and now all is gone, sailed onward, and vanished like a dream.

Lo! there must have been some sudden sound at the door! They all start and look toward it—the lean gentleman, in the shabby suit, clutches his map; his brawny companion advances a pace; the tall aristocrat arrests his walk, and stands fixed and breathless; while the lady shrinks further back, and draws her hood more closely over her face.

Their objects, then, must be secret.

It is, however, a false alarm, they resume their respective postures and occupations—and so leaving them, we wave the wand which conjured up the scene, and in a moment all is shivered, clouded, and gone.

But, lo! another rises gradually to view: it represents the dim vistas of a vaulted chamber, spanned with low, broad arches of stone, springing from the stone floor. Two blazing links, circled with a lurid halo from the heavy damps which hang there, in thin perpetual fog, shed a dusky, flickering glare upon the stained and dripping roof, and through the dim and manifold perspective of arches, until it spends itself in vapoury darkness. A group of some seven or eight figures stands in the fitful glow of this ruddy illumination—gentlemen of wealth and worship it would seem, by the richness of their garb: some are wrapt in their cloaks, some are booted, and all wear their broad-leafed, low-crowned hats. Strong lights and deep shadows mark many a furrowed and earnest face. This is no funereal meeting, as the place would seem to indicate—no trappings of mourning are visible, and the subject of their conversation, though deep and weighty, is too earnest and energizing for a theme of sorrow; neither is there, in the faces or gestures of the assembly, a single indication of excitement or enthusiasm. The countenances, the attitudes, the movements of the group, all betoken caution, deliberation, and intense anxiety. From time to time are seen, singly, or in couples, or in groups of three, other forms in the shadowy distance, as richly dressed, gliding like ghosts through the cloistered avenues, and holding with themselves, or one another anxious debate.

And now, a tall and singularly handsome young man, in gorgeous military uniform, turning from an elder personage in a velvet cloak, to whom he has been deferentially listening, moves a pace or two toward the detached parties, who walk slowly up and down, as we have described, and raising his plumed hat, he beckons them forward; and so they come, and muster with the rest; whereupon, the elder gentleman, in the velvet cloak, draws forth a letter, and with a brief word or two of preface, as it would seem, reads it for the rest, pausing from time to time to offer and receive remarks. This over, he says something further, whereupon he and all the rest raise their hats for a moment, and then he shows the letter to one of the company nearest to himself, who takes it, looks to the end, and then to the beginning, and then upon the back of it, and so passes it on to another, and so from hand to hand it goes, until again it reaches him who first produced it; and then, with the same solemn and earnest looks and air, they, one by one, take leave, shake hands, and glide away, until the old gentleman in the cloak, and one other remain. Then he in the cloak holds the corner of the momentous letter to the flaring link, and now it floats to the ground in flame, and now all that remains of the mysterious paper, is a light black film, coursed all over by a thousand nimble sparkles. Cautious old gentleman!

Enough—the spell is over, the lines and colours shift and change, shadows and lights are lost and mingled, and all is once more whirling and blended in vague, impenetrable cloud and darkness

But the pageant which has, for a fleeting moment, moved before us, has reflected a dread reality, whose consequences are not only entwined with the incidents of the history we are going to relate, but mingle in the currents of a thousand tales of glory; ay, and in the meanness and buffoonery of comedies, enough to feast all cynics, that ever were, or ever shall be, to satiety; and more nobly and sorrowfully, alas! in the dire events of tragedies, of most heroic and mournful splendour. It revealed the meeting of a council, upon whose wisdom, craft, and energy, hung the doom of millions—the fate of kingdoms, princedoms, powers,

CHAPTER II.

THE LADY AND THE PRIEST.

In the month of March, in the year of our Lord 1689, the red and dusky light of a frosty sunset had flung its crimson mantle over the broad sides of the Slieve-phelim hills, tinting the white rocks and the wintry woods which irregularly covered their wide expanse with a genial blush, which again melted softly away into the deep blue shadows that gathered mistily in the long sweeping hollows and rugged defiles into which that wild range winds and breaks. Among other objects, this rich colouring illuminated the irregular, gray front of a building of considerable antiquity, and some strength, although wholly incapable of resisting, with any sustained effect, the artillery of an age still less advanced in military science than the eventful one of which we write. Even then a time-worn pile, carrying in its aspect something venerable and saddened, and not the less picturesque, perhaps, that its character was somewhat undefined, and its parts adapted with small attention to regularity of structure—here presenting the character of a fortress, and there that of an antique dwelling-house; in some parts bound in the giant clasp of the dark embowering ivy, and at others exposing to the dusky light of the setting sun its hoary front, and steep, gray-flagged roof, with all its furniture of glittering windows, and darksome portals, and the low-arched gateway which, under its deep shadow and heavy masonry, seemed to warn away the intruder with a jealous scowl. Around this building, and much nearer than military precaution would have allowed them, and but partially and irregularly cleared from about the mansion, stood grouped the fantastic birch and oak which then and there, even within the memory of man, skirted with wild and beautiful forest, whole miles, we might say leagues, of the mountain sides. Thus circumstanced, and occupying the slope of the mountain's foot, the castle of Lisnamoe stood, on the evening we have mentioned, steeped in the glowing, airy tide which flooded all the broad and hazy landscape, as far as the eye might reach, with dusky crimson.

This evening-light, solemn and melancholy as the chastened beam which streams through the stained oriel of some ancient church, poured through three narrow windows, deep set in the thickness of the wall, into a low, broad chamber within the building which we have just described. Heavy beams traversed its ceiling from end to end; its floors and wainscoating were of shining wood, as black as the bog oak; and the furniture, of which there was no lack, seemed fashioned in the same dark wood. Cupboards and presses there were; chairs and tables, and chests of rude and antique workmanship; a row of clumsy book-shelves, partly stocked with volumes, occupied the wall above the yawning hearth; and near its side, in a high-backed, ponderous chair of oak, sat the only living inmate of the chamber.

It is a lady of stately, yet most sorrowful mein, clothed from head to foot in a suit of the deepest mourning—so thin and pale, and so unearthly still, as she leaned back in her chair, that, looking upon her, one might hold his breath and doubt if she were really alive. She must have been beautiful; in that wasted form and face the lines of beauty still linger; the fair proportion of the deer-like limbs, the noble formation of the small and classic head, and, above all, the exquisite line of grace and symmetry still traceable in the now sharpened and emaciated features, tell eloquently and mournfully of what she was. Of her age it were not easy to speak with certainty; if you look upon her hand, the fineness, the delicacy, and snowy whiteness of its texture, contrasted like polished ivory with the dark, shining table on which it rests, would bespeak her little more than a girl—a young girl, wasted by decay, and soon to forsake for ever this beautiful world, with all its bright enchantments still undissolved around her, and even in life's happy spring-tide called away for ever. Look again at the pale face, and there you read not the traces of early decay; it is not the countenance of youth—deep lines of sorrow, anguish, despair, have left their ineffaceable character upon its sharp and colourless contour; acutest suffering, chastened by profound humility, are there mournfully predominant; and again, behold from beneath the black velvet cap there strays in silver lines a long grey lock. The usual tests of woman's age are here inapplicable and at fault; and whatever be her years, it is but too plain that wild and terrible affliction has anticipated the hand of time, and that the pity-moving spectacle who sits alone in the dim chamber, is the fearful work of strange troubles—the wreck of grievous agony, perhaps of fierce and wayward passion—that she is one whose pride, and fire, and beauty, the storm has quenched, and reft, and shattered—one whose inward desolation is complete.

But ere this description might be written, she so moveless, so literally death-like before, had on a sudden raised her quenched and sunken eyes passionately toward heaven, clasped her thin hands, and wringing them bitterly in what seemed the agony of prayer, broke forth in low and earnest accents.

"Oh! that it might be so, that it might be so—oh! that my worthless life might yield this one good and worthy service—that I might, unseen and lost as I am, guard them from this mysterious danger. Inscrutable are the ways of heaven, wonderful its dispensations, that I, *I* should have been carried hither, on the currents of that dreadful destiny of which I am now the unresisting sport—borne to this place, cast among these people, just as my presence here—weak, worthless, mayhap forgotten—oh! bitter word, forgotten!—as I am—may prove a blessing; may open an escape; may save life, and rescue innocence. Weak and imperfect are my means; but there is One who can even with the folly of the weak confound all the wisdom of the wicked, and bring the designs of the crafty utterly to nought. In His hands their safety is, and He with his mighty arm protects the good and pure."

As she thus spoke the tears rose to her eyes, and she wept for some minutes in bitter humiliation, softly repeating from time to time the last words she had spoken—"the good and pure, the good and pure!"—On the table before her lay pen and ink, and a piece of paper, on which, in characters as plain as printing, were written certain words, with whose import the reader may hereafter be made more fully acquainted.

This paper lay upon the table before the sable-clad lady, who was still weeping bitterly, when a knock was heard at the chamber door; she hastily took the paper, folded it, and having placed it within the bosom of her gown, desired the visitor to come in. The door opened, and there entered a very young man, dressed in a suit of the plainest black, with his own dark brown hair falling in curls upon his shoulders; his face was thin and pale, his forehead high and intellectual; and, though his form was fragile, and somewhat stooped, and his face worn and sallow with the midnight studies, and, perchance, the austerities of his religious calling; and though in his countenance, mingling with its prevailing expression of gravity, was a sadness and even a sweetness which might have seemed scarcely consistent with the energy of his sex, yet in his dark eye there burned a certain light—the fire of an enthusiasm—which, in a character less gentle, might easily have degenerated into the wildness and ferocity of fanaticism.

With that air of melancholy respect, which great misfortunes in noble minds never fail to inspire, the young priest, for so he was, approached the lady.

"I trust," said he, gently, "that my visit has not come unseasonably; it shall be but a brief one, and I grieve to say, it must be my last. I have come to bid you farewell!"

"Your last visit! and to bid farewell!" repeated she, mournfully. This is a sudden, and to me a sad parting. You leave the castle, then, to-night?"

"Yes, and for many reasons," he replied, firmly. "What I yesterday suspected, I more suspect to-day. Those whose hearth I have shared, and whose bread I have eaten for so long, I will not betray; nor shall I stay here to have my mind filled with apprehensions, which I dare not divulge, and which to keep secret is to connive at hidden wickedness, and to participate in sin. I must away—I will hear and see no more of that which it troubles my conscience to hide, and which yet I may not tell. I am resolved—my part is taken, and so a long farewell to the place where I have passed so many quiet years—a long farewell to those who have been my early friends. Other scenes await me, where, with less of happiness, and, perchance, of safety, I may command more opportunities of good. And, gentle and most afflicted lady, in leaving you, ignorant of the purpose which has brought you here—unacquainted with the sad story of your life—unacquainted even with your very name, and seeking not to penetrate the deep mystery of your existence—I feel yet that in leaving you I shall part from a friend."

"I thank you for believing so—I thank you heartily," rejoined she, sadly and earnestly; "and pray you to do me so much justice as to continue to regard me thus while you live, and by this worthless token to remember me."

The young man took the ring which she presented, and having thanked her, she resumed—

"I shall, indeed, miss your gentle counsel—your kindness, your pity—*sorely* miss them," said the lady, with patient sorrow.

"God grant you comfort," said the ecclesiastic, earnestly laying his hand upon the thin wasted fingers of the lady.

"Comfort—comfort!" said she, quickly and almost wildly; "no, no—no, no. You know not what you say—comfort for me!—oh! never more."

"Yes, lady, there *is* comfort for you, whatever be your fears and sorrows—a consolation reserved even for the sin-stained conscience—even for the broken heart," he said, solemnly and affectionately; "reject it not—the Church, with the voice of heavenly love and mercy, calls you to her bosom—implores of you to come; and, with a smile of pity, and forgiveness, and encouragement, will fold you in her arms."

The lady slowly shook her head in mute despair.

"Turn not away from comfort—hope—forgiveness"—he said, while his eye kindled, and his form seemed to dilate with the glory and grandeur of his theme. "The Church—the eternal Church—of whose glorious company I am but the meanest and basest servant—the Church, even with my voice, calls thee to herself. Come, and she will tell thee how thou mayest have hope—how thou mayest, indeed, obliterate the dreadful stains of remorseful memory—how thou mayest be lifted up from the dark and fathomless abyss of sin and despair, and, mounting toward the throne of grace, ascend, until at last, when expiation shall have done its work, your soul shall rise, pure and glorious as a sinless angel, into the light of the eternal presence of God. Oh! turn not away; refuse not to be saved; reject not the heavenly message!"

"I have," she answered, humbly but firmly, and still with downcast eyes—"I have, as I have told you ere now, but one trust, but one hope, one faith—and these rest not in any Church."

A slight flush of impatience for a moment tinged the pale cheek of the priest; but it quickly subsided, and his countenance wore even more than its wonted expression of sadness, as, with arms folded and eyes cast down, he slowly paced the chamber-floor in silence.

"And whither do you purpose to go?" asked the lady, after a considerable pause,

"Any where—I care not whither. *First* to Limerick, as I am at present minded," he answered. "I hear there is a chaplaincy to one of the new regiments yet unfilled; but night draws on apace, time presses, and I must away."

"I need not remind you," she said——

"Of my promise of yesterday?" interrupted he. "Assuredly not; the paper shall be conveyed, though, for the reasons then assigned, under circumstances of perfect mystery. These are dark and perilous times—the saints guide and guard us!"

The lady then placed the document, of which we have already spoken, in his hands, and the ecclesiastic resumed—

"I well know how much depends upon the safe conveyance of this paper. Trust me, I shall not fail: before midnight it shall be in his hands."

"And if he hearken not to that," she said, "neither will he hear though one rose from the dead. God speed thee, and farewell!"

CHAPTER III.

THE ROAD TO GLINDARRAGH—THE THREE HORSEMEN WHO TRAVELLED IT.

The young priest drew his cloak closely about his face,—mayhap to hide some evidences of bitter emotion which he could not altogether repress,—and hastily catching up the little bundle which formed his only luggage, he descended the narrow staircase, and passing forth upon the short green sward, he was soon traversing the winding pathway under the boughs of the wild wood. Leaving him for the present among the lengthening shadows, to pursue alone his hurried way toward the distant towers of Glindarragh Castle, we must glance for a moment at another party, who, from an opposite direction, and upon very different thoughts intent, were also tending toward that antique and hospitable mansion.

It was upon the same evening, then, that a cavalcade, consisting of three horsemen, might have been seen slowly approaching the steep old bridge of Glindarragh. Foremost and alone rode a young gentleman, apparently somewhere about six-and-twenty years of age, dressed in a riding suit of rich material, which was cut, moreover, in the extreme of the then prevailing fashion; a low-crowned hat, whose broad leaf was slightly cocked in front, overshadowed his handsome but somewhat sallow features, which were not unbecomingly relieved by the sable curls of his flowing peruke. The richness of the lace, which fluttered in the loose ends of his short neck-cloth, as well as in his ruffles, together with the expensive elegance of his whole attire, bespoke him a gallant, profuse in his habits and courtly in his tastes; while the delicacy and hauteur of his features, and a certain negligent and graceful ease with which he sate his horse, betokened one of gentle birth and high breeding; there was, moreover, in the bearing of this gentleman a kind of bold, good-humoured frankness, which indicated one who has seen the world, and knows how to make the most of it, go where he may, upon the shortest possible notice.

Behind him rode, at a little distance, his valet, a small, withered, bilious Englishman, bestriding a singularly tall and raw-boned steed, and looking with a soured expression and a "careless desolation" from object to object, as he mentally and not unfrequently audibly contrasted the uninviting prospect before him with the substantial comforts which every where greeted the eye of the traveller in his own happier land.

Beside him, and carrying behind his saddle a huge leathern trunk, containing so much of his master's wardrobe as he brought with him for present use, rode Tim Dwyer, an appendage picked up at a Dublin inn, rather for his supposed useful than for his decorative attributes, and whose office it was to have a general eye after every thing, and see that nothing went wrong—an office which, though apparently one of considerable anxiety and trouble, yet seemed to cost that individual marvellously little of either. His tastes ran strongly in the direction of blarney, quiet quizzing, and ardent spirits. His secret philosophy pointed to "number one" as decidedly the most important object in nature, and his leading principle was embodied in an injunction to take the world *aisy*. Tim Dwyer's outward man was almost as lean and little as that of his companion; but, unlike him, his face wore a genial flush, which improved into a purple as it mounted to the sharp extremity of his nose; his eyes were small grey ones, and seldom more than half open; and his mouth, which was remarkably wide, was singularly flexible at the corners, which were generally slightly drawn downward when the rest of his face appeared to be laughing—a peculiarity which gave habitually to his whole countenance a sort of humbugging expression, strongly indicative of his propensities. When we add that this person presented, in his threadbare and slovenly attire, a marked contrast to the equipments of his natty companion, and that his years appeared to number some four or five-and-forty, we have said all that we have been able to collect respecting his external peculiarities.

As the young gentleman who headed this cavalcade rode slowly forward—for one of his horse's shoes was loose—his ruminations at length embodied themselves in a soliloquy like this:—

"And so, like a dutiful son, here I am, beset with bogs and mountains, wild geese and savages, and about to play the amorous Romeo at the feet of a rustic hoyden, whom I never yet beheld, in this old mildewed castle of Glin—Glindarragh, I think they call it—and if the lady but please to pity my amorous distress, forthwith I must be married! Percy Neville, Percy Neville, was ever filial piety like thine! Yet needs must, they say, when the devil drives. A younger son, without provision, can't defend himself, lies at the mercy of his parents, and is the natural prey and sport of paternal atrocity. Here have I been for full twelve months marooned upon this desolate island; and when I expected a letter of recall, and looked day by day for my deliverance, lo! there comes a new paternal dispatch—I'm ordered to the wilds of Munster, to be murdered or married, as the case may be! Oh! Percy

Neville, great is thy filial obedience, and odds my life, thou hast had thy reward, too; for thy days have been wonderous long in this land."

The young man concluded with a discontented shrug; and speedily recovering his constitutional gaiety, he hummed a madrigal, as his eye swept over the broad and wooded expanse which spread before him to the very feet of the Slieve-phelim hills.

"Well," said he, as if the expansive view and the freshening breeze had given a new impulse to his spirits, "who knows but the girl may turn out after all to be just what I've pictured to myself a thousand times, as the very creature most formed to delight and dazzle mankind; a Chloe or a Phillis—an Arcadian beauty, with the charms of Venus, and the simplicity of Flora. I'm tired of your fine ladies, with their essences, and paint, and buckram, their easy airs and their easy virtue; and, egad, if I could meet with such a damsel as I might describe, methinks I could, with a good grace and heart's content, take her to wife, and help to tend her cabbages and turkeys, without a wandering wish or a roving thought to tempt me back into the artificial world again."

Meanwhile, the two squires, to borrow the language of knight errantry, interchanged pleasant and profitable discourse, as they followed their master side by side.

"The more I see of it, the worse I likes it," observed Dick Goslin, glancing superciliously around him—"it's all bogs and starvation!"

"Be dad, it's thrue for you," responded Tim—"bogs an' starvation, sure enough."

"Starvation and stink, sir," continued the foreigner, with increasing asperity." "Faugh! I wonder the very pigs don't cut and run; now, jest you look round at that 'ere prospect, will you."

Tim looked round accordingly, with the good-humoured compliance of a nurse "humouring" a spoilt child; and not knowing exactly what was expected from him in the way of remark, remained silent.

"You call that the country, I believe?" resumed the valet with bitter disdain; "the country—eh? The country is the word—you'll correct me if I'm wrong."

"The counthry we call it, be the hokey, true for you," responded Tim with a contrite air: "but how in the world id the likes iv us know the differ, Misther Goslin, sir—oh murdher, but ignorance is a poor thing."

"The country! Yes: ha, ha, the country!" continued Mr. Goslin, scornfully; "why not? But do you know what I call it, my honest feller, for if you don't, I'll tell you."

"Why then, I'm ashamed to say I do *not*," replied Tim.

"I call it," he continued with extreme severity, "a low, dirty, vulgar, 'owling desert, and that's what I call it, my fine feller, do you mind me?"

"An' that's just what it is to the life, all over," chimed in the Hibernian; "a low, dirty—phiew, it fairly goes beyant me, Mr. Goslin, there's no tellin' what it is—it bangs all the powers iv discourse, an' laves me that I'm fairly flusthrated for the want iv words."

"And then the people, the Irishers," resumed Mr. Goslin, turning up his eyes and his hands, as well as his hold of the bridle would allow him—"did any inhuman being ever look at such a nest of land savages? for I'm consumed if ever *I* did."

"Thrue for you—what else are are we but savages, every mother's skin iv us?" rejoined his companion.

"And then, in the matter of gentlemanlike amusements—why rat me, if the benighted pagans at the inn last night understood me, when I asked if they ever had a bear-fight in the town," he continued, with a sneer of the sublimest scorn; "and then their cooking—faugh! its enough to make a gentleman swear against wittles."

"Whisht!" said Tim Dwyer, prolonging the ejaculation, while he nudged his companion once or twice, and stole a furtive glance all round.

"Why, what's the matter now?" inquired the valet, rather uneasily, and following the cautious glance of his comrade. "Nothing wrong—eh?"

"Whisht—nothin' at all, but myself that was going to tell you something," replied Tim Dwyer, speaking still in a whisper, and looking cautiously from side to side, "only I was afeared some iv the boys might hear me, do you mind, an' if they did, it might lead to MURDHER."

He stooped as he uttered the last emphatic word in a grim whisper in the ear of his companion, and followed it by a portentous wink.

With a good deal of excitement, Mr. Goslin exclaimed,

"I say, Tim Dwyer, my good fellow, what the devil are you at—speak out, man—can't you?"

"You were mentionin' their cookery," observed Tim.

"Ay—what then?" replied the other.

"What then? Why, ain't you a Protestant?" said Tim; "don't you see it now?"

"Well, split my windpipe, if I do," replied Mr. Goslin.

"Well, then, here it is," rejoined Mr. Dwyer, in a hard mysterious whisper, "they have a way iv cooking, an' a soort of vittles, do ye mind, whenever they get the ways and the mains iv comin' at it, that id frighten you to hear iv, let alone to see it. Oh murdher! but we're the divil's savages, and flogs the blackimoors—divil a doubt iv it!"

"Come, come, my good man, speak out, can't you?" urged Dick Goslin, pettishly.

"Spake out! Bedad I won't, for how 'id I know who'd be listenin'?" retorted Tim. "But the long an' the short iv it's just this, we're rale tearin', devourin' savages—*devourin'*, do ye mind, bastes iv *prey*, Misther Goslin; savages by nature, and papists by religion, an' as hungry as vultures, do ye mind."

"Why, you don't mean for to say as how you'd eat inhuman flesh?" ejaculated the Englishman, with a slight change of colour, and eyeing his companion with horrible curiosity.

"Not in *Dublin*, iv coorse," replied Tim Dwyer.

"Nor any where else neither, *I* should say—eh?" continued the valet, with increasing consternation.

"Whis—sht!" ejaculated Tim, putting his finger to his nose mysteriously; "the Munsthermen has their oddities, an' no wondher; it's a mighty poor place entirely, an' provisions is murdherin' scairce; it's hard to deny the craythurs when they're cryin' for a bit; an' necessity's the mother iv invention."

"Why strike me flat, do you mean for to go for to say?"—exclaimed the Londoner, much excited.

"I main for to say this much," interrupted Tim Dwyer, "that if I was so befrinded by heaven as to be an Englishman, do you mind me? an' so illumi*nated* as to be a Protestant, do you see? an' if I found myself in a strange part iv Munster, do you consave, where I wouldn't be missed if any thing was to happen me, why I'd take special good care to keep myself ankimminly quiet, an' not to be lookin' in before male times especially, into the cabins iv the poor starvin' craythurs, that's fond, to a failin', iv fresh mate and black puddins—do you undherstand me?"

The cockney turned very pale, and breathed hard, as, with lips compressed, and sidelong glance of horrible significance, he exchanged a ghastly wink with his companion.

"Don't tell, for the life iv you, it was *I* toult you. Mind, honour bright, isn't it?" urged Tim Dwyer, in a low and earnest whisper.

"Word and honour, hand and glove," replied the valet, with chivalric emphasis, and then sank into profound and moody silence, which he doggedly maintained until the three horsemen rode leisurely under the echoing archway of Glindarragh Castle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHETIC SONG—AND HOW THE KILLIOCH READ THE OMEN OF TORLOGH O'BRIEN.

The castle of Glindarragh occupied the bank of a broad and devious mountain river, and presented a striking and somewhat sombre *coup d'œil.* The buildings of which it was composed formed a quadrangle of considerable dimensions, and though varying in height, were all alike structures of an ancient date, and of exceeding solidity and strength; its eastern side overhung the stream, from whose waters its walls arose in gray and sombre masses; and in that which looked toward the north, under a lofty arch, lay the chief entrance to the castle; in the olden time guarded by a portcullis and drawbridge, but now protected solely by an old and ponderous gate of oak, studded with huge iron nails, with heads as large as penny pieces—the fosse was dry, and choked with bushes, and at the entrance had been raised to the level of the road by which the building was approached, so that as a fortress, or post of military defence, the structure had manifestly been long disused; from the western side, sloped gently downward, as if in further evidence of the peaceful character and pursuits of its present owners, a closely hedged flower garden, varied with long grass terraces, and many trim living walls and arbours of close dark yew, exhibiting the exactest care in its culture, and in the richness and complication of its quaintly cut knots and beds, resembling the pattern of a fantastic carpet. To this rich and formal flower-garden, a smaller gate or sally port in the castle wall gave admission; the remaining side, which faced toward the south, contained those buildings which supplied, though upon an unwieldy scale, and in a sufficiently quaint and clumsy fashion, the purposes of a modern dwelling-house. At the moment when the three mounted travellers entered the great gate, which stood hospitably open to receive them, and gazed curiously round upon the antique buildings in whose shadows they stood, two very different figures were seated within the wall of the old castle.

The chamber which they occupied was a low room of moderate dimensions; the floor was covered with matting, and the ceiling was of clumsily joined, time-blackened oak; gilded leather hung the walls, and a lofty mantel-piece, supported by two spiral stone pillars, masked with its projection the broad arch of the hearth, in which a pile of turf and wood was burning. An old picture of a gentleman in the costume of Charles the First, much in need of cleaning, and which had suffered, whether accidentally or of malice prepense, a very ugly scar across the lower part of the visage, hung at the far end of the room in a dingy frame, and very imperfectly lighted.

The furniture of the chamber presented nothing remarkable, except that it was a little behind the fashion of the day, and of an unpretending and somewhat threadbare aspect, but still comfortable, and with a sort of snug air of old housekeeping about it, which more than made amends for its want of elegance. A narrow bed occupied a recess in the wall, and a single window, commanding a view of the winding river, and a vast and ancient orchard, and beyond them, of a broad plain, bounded by undulating hills, with the mighty Galties in the dim distance, admitted the light.

In a massive arm chair, singularly disproportioned to the dimensions of its occupant, was seated a little old woman, dressed in a sort of loose red wrapper, with short sleeves, showing her shrivelled yellow arms above the elbows, and with a coloured handkerchief brought over her head and knotted under her chin; a comical mixture of goodnature, gratification, and self-importance, was impressed upon her withered features, round which, escaping from beneath the folds of the kerchief which bound her head, there wantoned a few locks of grizzled red hair.

Seated near her feet, upon a low stool, with the guitar on which she had, but the moment before, been accompanying her sweet and silvery voice, lying carelessly in her lap beneath her snow white arm, her other hand being laid upon the old woman's knee, while with a beautiful smile, half of fun and half of fondness, she looked up into her nurse's face, was the fairest girl that ever yet combined the matchless graces of perfect form and feature, with the lovelier charms of expression ever varying, ever beautiful—the subtle, heart-stirring magic of true loveliness—the witchery, that sweetly, sadly, passionately beguiles the senses, and steals away the heart of the rapt gazer even while he looks.

"God bless you, mavourneen," said the old woman, "God keep you, my darlin', with your purty face and your purty songs; but of all the tunes you have, the one you sung the last, though its the best may-be, I like it the least."

"And why, nurse," asked the girl, with a smile. "Is it because the tune is a mournful one?"

"It is not that alone, alanna," replied the old woman, with a shake of the head, "though it's lonesome enough, God knows, it laves me."

"What is it, then?" insisted the young lady, merrily. "Why does old nurse scorn my poor music? I know no sweeter tune than that; it needs must be you think I spoil it in the singing."

"Spoil it! my darlin'—spoil it! acushla," ejaculated the old nurse. "No, no, it's only too sweet an' beautiful you sing it, my darlin'; if you knew but the mainin' iv the tune—an' its little I ever thought I'd hear one iv your name singing it, my purty child—aiah! but its a quare way things comes round, and it's many's the day since that song was heard inside these ould walls before; not since bloody Cromwell's wars: I was but a slip of a colleen then myself—aiah wisha! but time runs on, flowin' for ever, as constant as the river there, and no one noticin' it all along; an' it's many's the acorn is grown into an oak, and many's the sthrong man is undher the grass, and many's the purty girl is turned into a wrinkled ould *killioch* like myself, since thim days, avourneen!"

"Well, nurse, but the tune," urged the young lady; "what harm is in the tune?"

"Harm, darlin'—why, then, it's little harm, or maybe less good there's in it," continued the old woman, oracularly; "but who in the wide world larned it to you, my own purty colleen?"

"*That*, nurse, is more than I myself can tell," rejoined the girl, whose curiosity was a little piqued at the air of mingled mystery and anxiety with which the old crone dwelt upon the song; "I heard a girl sing it, as she went through the woods on the other side of the river, and so sweetly, that I listened until her wild notes were quite lost in the distance; and thus it was I learned the song, first one cadence, then another, and so on until the whole was learned; and for the words I sing with it, they are Master Shakspeare's. The girl from whom I caught the air was singing in Irish."

"I'd give a gold piece I had my thumb on her windpipe," replied the old beldame, fiercely, with a sudden and savage ferocity almost appalling. "I'd have tightened her whistle for her, the robber; for it's an ould sayin' I often heard, 'a crowing hen was never lucky.'"

"Tell me, nurse—do, dear nurse, tell me, what is there in the song to move you thus?" asked the lady, at the same time drawing her stool closer to the old woman's feet, and coaxingly looking up into her face.

"It's a song, darlin'," answered the nurse, "that was made in the ould times, by the O'Briens, before they lost this castle an' all the lands, the last time in Cromwill's wars, as I often tould you; it was med near a hundred years ago, when the Willoughbys first got the court—the time the monks was turned out of Glindarragh abbey, as I often heard my grandmother tellin'—God rest her—an' it's all full iv promises how the O'Briens is to come back, and to hold the castle and the lands again, in spite of the world; and it's well I can think iv the time before your grandfather's father—the saints receive him—it's well I remember him, though I was no more nor a slip iv a girl, an' he an ould man—was killed in the troubles on the bridge there below, ripped up and hacked to pieces with their skeins, like an ould horse they'd be tearing up in pieces for the dogs, and tumbled over the battlements, that you would not know him from a big sack of blood, if it wasn't for the nice long gray hair he wore—God rest him—into the river, that was rollin' and foamin' bank high, and roarin' like a mill sluice under every arch, that blessed day. It's well I can remember how we used to hear them in the long nights before that, singin' the same song in the wood opposite the castle; and, thrue enough, the O'Briens *did* get in, an' had it to themselves, as I tould you, for eight long years, until Cromwill's war come, and your grandfather—God rest him—got it back; an' Cromwell druv them all out of the counthry, an' left them not a sod, nor a stick, nor a stone belonging to them; an' they were great men of courage in Spain—generals and the likes, as was reported here—an' was always promisin' how they'd come home some day, and win back the ould castle, and the twelve town-lands, and the three estates, and the wood of Glindarragh, an' all the rest; an' latterly there was talks of Torlogh Dhuv—a young boy of the O'Briens—as it was reported here, the greatest and the wickedest of them all, a terrible man of war and blood; and it's said, moreover—the Lord guard and save us all—that he swore himself, on the altar, before the blessed and holy Pope, as I'm tould, in furrin parts, never to rest antil he had revenge on them that took the lands and the blood of his family."

"That is Torlogh Dhuv, whose name used to frighten me when I was a child!" said the young girl. "Do you remember, nurse, how you used to say? 'Dont go there, or Torlogh Dhuv will have you,' and so on. But, in truth, I do believe from all I have learned, that he is a bad and violent man—nay, if report speak truth, a very monster of cruelty. My father heard but a week since that he is coming over to this country, and moreover, to have a command in the king's army."

"May God forbid, my darling child! God in his mercy, an' all the saints, forbid!" cried the old woman, while her withered cheeks turned pale with horror, and in the energy of her terror she started up from her seat, and stood shaking and wan as the guilty resurrection of the old woman of Berkeley.

"Why, nurse! dear nurse—why are you thus appalled?" said the young lady, herself well nigh affrighted at the undisguised terror of the old woman.

"Ah, my child, I'm afeard the lands and castle are lost—lost to yov and yours for ever, darling—an' what worse, I know not, mavourneen. The old prophecy is comin' out—he has the mark on his forehead, they all say that, and now he's coming to this counthry. Oh, wirristhru! wirristhru!"

"Dear nurse," said the young lady, half afraid that agitation had unsettled the old woman's wits, "what does all this mean?"

"Mean, darling, mean!" echoed the agitated woman; "it's too soon, I'm afeard, you'll know the meaning of it all, acushla. Hasn't he the mark; an' isn't he comin' to the counthry—may be in it this blessed minute—the Lord be marciful to us all; and then it's a little thing id bring him to Glindarragh-bridge. Oh, voh, voh! but it's myself that has the sore heart this day!"

"Dear nurse, tell me what so much afflicts you in all this," said the beautiful girl earnestly.

"Listen to me, mavourneen—listen, to me, asthora," replied the nurse, while she shook her head, and raised her trembling hand; "it's an ould prophecy that was made long ago, an' they all knew when Cormack got the castle, in the throubles, that he'd lose it again, for he had not the marks in the prophecy. It was made in Irish, when first they lost the lands, in the ould queen's time, a hundred years ago, an' this is the way it runs."

The crone paused as she conned over the fatal words; her white lips moving, and her shrivelled hand and arm uplifted, while she cowered over the lovely girl in the earnest effort to recall the syllables of the mystic rhyme, looking the very impersonation of one of those benevolent but hideous fairies, who, in nursery tales, delight to attend at royal christenings, and mutter over the high-born heroine of the story those spells of auspicious potency which guard and save her through all the enchanted dangers through which she is to pass.

At last the old woman, having satisfied herself of the accuracy of her recollection, repeated in a low and sullen tone some rude verses in Irish.

"And what is the meaning of the Irish, dear nurse?" inquired the lady; "for as yet I am no wiser than at first."

I'll tell you that, my child," replied the old domestic. "I'll tell you that; I'll give you, word for word, the English of it all. This is the way it goes, then—

'When the real O'Brien shall stand again
On the bridge of Glindarragh,
With a shamrogue in the bone of his forehead,
And a jewel round his arm.
His horse shall keep holyday, stabled
Under the long hall as of old,
And his own shall never lose O'Brien any more.'

There it is, my child, there it is; acushla—an' sure it's thrublin' me, darlin', this minute while I'm sittin' here."

"It is a strange prophecy, nurse," said the fair girl, musingly. "And a strange mark it describes—a shamrogue in the bone of his forehead! Is it not so it runs?"

"So it is, darling, and the mark is *there*, in the bone of his forehead, sure enough," replied the old woman, mournfully. "A wound with a bullet that bruk the skull, left the print of the shamrogue in his forehead for ever—the three leaves, I'm toult, as plain as you'd pick it in the field; and now he's comin' to the counthry, and what's to keep him from the castle bridge. Oh! my darlin' acushla ma chree, it's comin' it is, asthora, an' nothin' can keep it back."

At this moment a knocking was heard at the chamber door, and two handmaidens, breathless with haste and eagerness, burst into the room, both talking together so loud and so fast, that it was some time ere the young lady had ascertained that the purpose of their visit was to announce the arrival of her kinsman, Percy Neville, with the nature of whose visit the reader is already acquainted. The duties of hospitality would brook no delay; and Sir Hugh, as ill fortune would have it, was some miles from his home. So pretty Grace had no choice, awkward as was the task, but to run down to the chamber where her expectant kinsman awaited her, and herself to bid him welcome to Glindarragh. Wondering what kind of man he should prove to be, a good deal flushed, and a good deal fluttered, sustained, however, against the tremors of agitation by a certain amount of pride and natural dignity which never forsook her, with a light step, and a frank and gracious bearing, she entered the room to bid the stranger welcome.

Strange to say, it required but a single glance at the pale and somewhat effeminate features of the young stranger, and at the indolent negligence of his attitude, to quiet in an instant every fluttered feeling, and restore the embarrassed girl very nearly, if not entirely, to her usual self-possession. With perfect *sang froid*, though with no lack of courtesy, the young man arose, and with the formal gallantry of the day, carried the lady's hand to his lips; and then, in his own light and careless way, he ran on from one trifle to another, and with, as she thought, a very perceptible indifference about the kind of impression he was making, and a total want of that kind of interest or even curiosity about the object of his destined choice, which is supposed to animate even the coldest lover. It were hard to say which of the two was most disappointed; for, though the young lady was eminently beautiful—there could be no question of that—yet her beauty was not of that saddened and gentler kind; there was not the homeliness, and humility, and piquante *mauvaise honte*—in short, there was not presented to him that entire contrast to the style of female beauty, and mien, and dress, to which he had been in England accustomed ; nor, if the truth must out, that decided inferiority to himself, in ease of deportment and self-possession, which a strange combination of caprice and vanity had led him to wish for, and wishing for, more than half to expect. In a word, never did two persons, brought together under such circumstances, stand before one another more completely disenchanted, than did Grace Willoughby and Percy Neville, as they thus encountered, in the dark and formal old parlour, hung round with grim and faded portraits, which seemed to look down with a kind of starch and severe approval upon this singularly platonic interview.

So strongly did the absurdity of their mutual position strike the young lady, that, after several ineffectual efforts, she at last gave way to a burst of merriment, so hearty and prolonged, that Percy Neville felt himself irresistibly drawn into it ; and the youthful pair laughed peal after peal of as merry and honest laughter as ever the old rafters rang with.

"Well, cousin Percy," said the girl at last, while the merry tears still glittered in her lashes, "we shall at least prove good friends and cheerful companions while you stay; and if our parting, which I do really hope may be a long way off, be but half so good-humoured as our meeting, why we shall separate without one particle of malice or ill-nature, and I believe without the heart-ache either."

There was something so frank and hearty in the way in which the girl stretched out her little hand as she ended the sentence, that Percy felt, as, with a half comic half cordial salutation, he took her proffered hand, that it was then and there mutually covenanted and agreed between them that marriage and love-making were quite out of the question. We shall leave Percy Neville for the present, and follow Grace Willoughby, who, much relieved by finding that the visit of her kinsman would, after all, prove by no means the formidable and momentous matter she had so much feared, put on her hood, and ran lightly to her flower-garden to visit, ere the ruddy sunlight had quite disappeared, the early flowers that, with girlish delight, she greeted every time she looked on them, as the sweet harbingers of summer. While thus employed, the notes of the prophetic song, which had so strangely fascinated her imagination, again reached the lady's ear; and little dreaming of danger or adventure, she vowed within herself that she would, with her own eyes, behold the minstrel who thus daringly chanted under the very walls of her father's castle the downfall of his family and the ruin of his fortunes.

CHAPTER V.

NARRATING ALL THAT BEFEL GRACE WILLOUGHBY IN THE WOOD OF GLINDARRAGH.

The young lady traversed the castle-yard without observation, and with a light step, and a heart charged with no graver feeling than girlish curiosity and love of frolic, she passed under the castle gate, and down the narrow road leading from the castle to the old bridge, which, with five high and narrow arches, crossed the river within some hundred yards of the gate of the old building. The sun had still some twenty minutes of his course to run, and was beginning to sink among the piles of crimson clouds, which, like a gorgeous couch, seemed softly wooing the god of day to his repose. The young lady, in her rich red mantle, paused for a moment, and leaning over the grey battlement, looked up the chafing wayward stream. On one side rose the hoary walls and massive towers of the castle, with its narrow windows glittering in the red sunbeams, and its ivy nodding and waving in the light breeze ef evening. On the other hung the wild wood of oak and thorn, whose branches, gnarled as the twisted horns of the wild deer which had once strayed proudly among their glades, overhung the wimpling flood, and caught the gilding and mellow light of the departing day. Between these objects, thus closing in the view, the dim hills and the far-off peaks of the mighty Galties faintly caught the level light in the filmy distance; and all seemed wrought with such a wondrous harmony of colouring, and such a melting softness of outline and shadowing, that, with the fresh sounds of the sighing breeze and rippling water, and the distant baying of village dogs, the lowing of the far-off kine, and the softened beating of the mill-wheels, mingling in the varied hum, and gently filling her ear with murmur not unmusical, she felt her heart moved within her with the tenderest joy, and sadness, and rapture, blended in strange absorbing ecstacy; so that, as she looked at the loved scene of all her brief existence—the old towers among which she was born; the river, whose hoarse voice, and changeful moods, and fitful eddies, and dark nooks, had been her familiar and, as it seemed, her kindly companions, from the time that memory had traced its earliest childish records; and the dear old wood where, with her fond nurse, she had wandered in the long autumn days, and gathered her infant treasures of bramble-berries and *frahauns*. As she looked at all these familiar, friendly scenes of her untroubled and gentle life—

the home of all her store of happiness, remembered or to come—tears, pure tears of tenderest joy rose in her dark eyes, quivered like glittering diamonds on her long lashes, and one by one fell on the bosom of her own loved stream, and mingling in the rejoicing current, seemed to blend her fond remembrances and gentle affections still more dearly than ever with its chiming waters. Alas! in all the fond security of a home, never yet clouded by one fleeting trouble—in all the trusting repose of a pure young heart, that never yet was grieved by disappointment, or wrung with the pangs of fear and sorrow—guileless as an angel stooping from Paradise over this vexed world, the fair girl looks upon the chafing river, and never dreams that such a thing as danger haunts the dear scenes of her childish sports.

This reverie or rapture is broken; she has on a sudden heard the song again; and with a half laugh, and a sudden start, resolved no more to forget the purpose of her ramble, she lightly descends the steep side of the bridge, and wanders by the river's bank through the hoary trees, among whose trunks and boughs the level light is streaming; and now she approaches the very spot where the songstress pours her melody; but, ere she reaches it, the object of her search is, as ill-fortune wills it, in motion—is gone—a screen of brushwood hides her effectually; and still the lady follows.

The sun had almost touched the verge of the distant hills, and the loneliness of the place—together, mayhap, with the ominous associations connected with the wild, sweet minstrelsy which lured her on—had already inspired, to allay the curiosity which had led her thus far, some little admixture of doubt and fear. She looked back; there was light, she thought, sufficient to see her home again, ere the sun had sunk, and to allow her time to pursue the invisible minstrel as far as the nearest screen of brambles, from under which it seemed the sounds were rising. She now approached it closely; the sounds were almost at her ear; and peeping through the bushes, she discerned a portion of the figure from which they proceeded, huddled up in a sort of bower, or rather lair. All she could distinctly see was the hand of the singer, which held a twig, with which the emphasis of the fierce and plaintive song was marked. On a sudden, as she watched this form, a sharp whistle reached her ear from some distance behind her. The figure started up, fully confronting her, and not a female, as she had expected to behold, but a wild, haggard, shock-headed boy stood gazing with a grin of something between wonder and ferocity full in her face. He was a mass of rags and filth, with the exception of a torn embroidered waistcoat, which might have fitted a full-grown man, and which descended, in very incongruous finery, to his very ancles, supplying his only substitute for the combined appliances of coat and vest. There was something savage and repulsive beyond expression in the face and bearing of this brawny urchin—an impression which the young lady felt considerably enhanced by observing the long straight blade of a skean shining under the folds of his vest. The beautiful girl, her lips parted with affright, her light form thrown back, and her head raised, stood like a startled deer, irresolute, and gazed at the squalid ruffian figure before her with a fascination which seemed reciprocal, for he also stood motionless, and stared in return upon her with a look of mingled curiosity and menace.

As they stood thus, the whistle was repeated; and the boy, without more delay, dived into the thickest of the underwood, and was lost to her sight. The apparition had appeared and vanished again with such astounding suddenness and rapidity, that, were it not that the sprays of the branches were still quivering where he had plunged through the thicket, she might have doubted whether the spectacle had not been indeed but the ideal creation of her own fancy.

Too late repenting the rashness which had led her to so sequestered a spot at such an hour, and unattended, at a season when, though danger had never approached herself, she well knew it to be abroad and busy, she began, flushed and agitated, to retrace her steps through the wood toward the old bridge, which once regained, she would feel herself again secure. But that bridge was not to be regained, poor girl, without the deadliest peril that ever yet were innocence and weakness exposed to. The danger moves between you and your home. Alas! urge your speed, fair girl, as you may, you do but approach it the faster; the danger is before you—moves towards you—see, it comes—it is here.

As she pursued her homeward path with rapid tread and beating heart, she came on a sudden—passing the corner of a dense mass of furze and brambles, full in front of a figure, in dimensions much more formidable than that she had last encountered, and in aspect scarcely less repulsive—a huge, square-shouldered fellow, arrayed in a blue laced coat, three-cocked hat and plume, and jack boots, affecting a sort of demi-military attire, with a sabre by his side, and a pair of pistols stuck in his belt, occupied the pathway directly before her.

At her sudden appearance he had instinctively laid his coarse red hand upon the butt of one of his pistols; but one second sufficed to withdraw it again, and with a "ho-ho-hum!" he set his feet apart and his arms akimbo, as if prepared to dispute her passage, and eyed her with a look half jocular, half brutal. If the manner and bearing of this personage were calculated to alarm the young lady, there was certainly in his visage very little to re-assure her. His face was large and broad, and suitably planted upon a powerful bull neck; a pair of glittering piggish eyes were set far apart in his head; his nose was drooping and somewhat awry; and a quantity of coarse reddish hair occupied his upper lip and chin, between which were glittering the double row of his tobacco-stained teeth, as he grinned facetiously in the face of the affrighted lady.

"And where are you going, my colleen dhas, in such a murdherin' hurry?" inquired he in a strong brogue, while at the same time he extended his arms to prevent the possibility of her passing him; "where is it you're going, my *colleen beg*, in all this foosther, an' at this time o' day?" and then breaking into song, and approaching her still more nearly, he continued—

"Oh! Colleen, it's not goin' to leave me,
An' breakin' your promise you'd be,
An' forgettin' the kisses you gave me
In undher the crooked oak tree?"

The young lady's colour came and went with mingled alarm and indignation, and her heart beat so fast that she felt almost choaking, as this coarse and ruffianly figure drew nearer and nearer to her: with a violent effort, however, she mastered her agitation sufficiently to reply in a firm tone.

"I am going home, sir, to the castle—I am Sir Hugh Willoughby's daughter. Pray, sir, allow me to pass on."

The fellow uttered a prolonged whistle of surprise, and then repeated with a grin—

"Sir Hugh Willoughby's daughter?—oh, ho! so much the better, my colleen oge. Come, lift up the hood, an' give us a peep, for they say you've a purty face of your own, acushla."

"Sir, I pray you, suffer me to go on my way," urged she, now thoroughly alarmed at the insolent familiarity of the fellow. "Sir, it is growing late, and the twilight is falling; do, sir, I entreat, allow me to go homeward,"

"Late—to be sure it is, darlin'," responded he, with a chuckle; "too late to let you pass without paying your way, my girl. There you stand—the purtiest girl in the seven parishes, as I'm tould; an' here stand I, a dashin' officer of the king's militia, an' as fine a fellow, my darlin', as ever a purty wench need desire to look at. Here we are, all alone, my beauty; an', sure enough, the twilight fast falling, an' the bushes all round."

"Sir, let me go—I must go home," said she, trembling violently, for she perceived that his jocular manner had given place to one savage and sullen determination, which rendered the familiarity the endearment of his language but the more menacing and repulsi "Sir, you will let me go—I know you will, you are an officer and gentleman!"

"Too old an officer not to know when I'm well served," replied h advancing; "and too much of a gentleman not to thank fortune for her favours. Come, come, sweetheart, no nonsense."

"Let me pass—let me pass," said she, almost breathless with terror; "let me go, for these are my father's woods, sir. How dare you bar my passage?"

"Come, come, come, none of your nonsense—this sort of balderdash will never go down with me," replied he, sternly, "*Monnum an dhioul*, what's your ould father to me; I wish I had him for five minutes here, foot to foot, and hand to hand, the bloody ould heretic dog, and you'd see what crows' meat I'd make of him. Look in my face, darlin', an' *thonnum an dhioul*, you'll see I'm in earnest; an' I tell what it is, mavourneen, it's often I shot a better woman than yourself."

Heedless of every menace, while in an instant a thousand, thousand thoughts and remembrances, and a thousand agonized appeals whirled in frightful chaos through her mind, the young girl, in wildest terror uttered shriek after shriek, while at the instant her wrist was grasped in the massive gripe of her assailant.

Oh! for some pitying angel to rescue kindred innocence and beauty. Oh! for some stalworth champion, with righteous heart and iron arm, to hew and crush the cowardly monster into dust. Oh! good Sir Hugh, come, come—in heaven's name, spur on thy good steed rowel-deep, spur on—spur, till thy way is tracked with blood and foam—ride for your life —for your life, Sir Hugh—thy daughter—the praised of every tongue, the pure and bright and beautiful, the idol of thy pride and love and life —thy child, for whose sake thou dost hold thy life-blood cheap—thy child, thy child, is struggling in a ruffian's grasp. Oh! for a messenger of mercy to peal this summons in his ears, and ring the alarm through all the chambers of his heart. Oh! beautiful Grace Willoughby, art thou then, indeed, defenceless? Not so; for at the very moment when the hand of the brawny villain had grasped the tiny wrist of the beautiful lady, a deliverer appeared.

Through the wood of Glindarragh there wound an old bridle-track—it scarcely deserved to be called a road—which, entering the wooded grounds about a mile away, followed its wild and sequestered course among the thick trees and brushwood, until it debouched upon the more frequented road, just by the Castle-bridge. From this lonely road, which passed scarcely two hundred yards behind the spot where Grace Willoughby held parley with her insolent and ruffianly assailant, an unexpected deliverer appeared.

"Holla, fellow! forbear thy rudeness, or, by the mass, I'll teach you a different behaviour! Do you hear, scoundrel?" cried a deep, stern voice, in a tone, less of anger, than of haughty and contemptuous command.

There was something in the suddenness, as well as in the tone of this interruption, which instantaneously diverted the attention of the ruffian from his intended victim, who, half dead with fear and agitation, staggered backwards, and supported herself, almost breathless, against a tree. At the same moment that he relaxed his grasp, he had turned in the direction of the speaker, and beheld, some thirty yards away, at the far end of the little glade in which he stood, mounted upon a powerful black charger, blazing in the splendour of a gorgeous military uniform, the figure of a tall man, of dark complexion and singularly handsome features, the character of which was at once melancholy and stern. His own black hair, instead of the monstrous peruke then fashionable, escaped from beneath his broad-leafed, white-plumed hat, and fell in clusters upon his shoulders; his burnished cuirass reflected the last red rays of the half-hidden sun, and the scarlet skirts, which, falling from beneath it, reached to the tops of his huge jack-boots, glowed and glittered with gold lace; his buff leather gauntlets reached half way to his elbows, and his good sword danced and clanged by his side.

Before time for further parley had elapsed, this cavalier was within ten steps of the burly militia-man; and in an instant springing from his military saddle, confronted him upon the sward.

"Stand there, good Roland," said he, throwing the bridle on the horse's neck, and instantly strode up to the ill-favoured fellow in the blue suit, who, nothing dismayed, awaited his approach with no other indication of emotion than a glance to the right and left, as if to see that, in case of a scuffle, his movements might be unembarrassed by branch or bramble; and, this precaution taken, he drew his beaver with an air of grim determination firmly down upon his brows, and resting his right hand upon the butt of one of the pistols which stuck in his belt, he set his left arm akimbo, and squaring himself while he planted his feet asunder firmly in the soil, he eyed the young soldier with a look of ferocious menace and defiance.

"Who and what are you, sirrah, who shame not to offer rudeness to an unprotected girl?" demanded the stalworth cavalier, in the same deep tones of contemptuous command. "Forbear, scoundrel, and begone! or by Saint Jago! your punishment shall be sharp and lasting!"

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"Pish! man; do you think to bully me?" rejoined the ruffian, with a darker scowl. "I don't want to be at mischief; but if you put me to it, I'll blow a brace of holes through your purty face, '*ma bouchal*,' and give you to the otters."

The dark eyes of the soldier flashed actual fire, as with the speed of light, his sabre gleaming in his hand, he sprang upon his brawny adversary.

"You *will* have it, then!" roared his opponent, while at the same instant he levelled one of his long horse-pistols in the face of the advancing dragoon; but as instantaneously a whirring sweep of his adversary's sabre, missing his fingers by scarcely a hair's-breadth, struck the weapon so tremendous a blow, that it leaped from his hand, and, spinning through the air as if hurled by the arm of a giant, it plunged far away into the stream, flinging the foam from about it a yard high into the air, and before the weapon had yet touched the water, the swordsman, dashing his sabre-hilt into his antagonist's face, struck him so astounding a blow, that he rolled over and over headlong upon the sward; and in the next instant, ere he had recovered his senses, the triumphant soldier had planted his knee upon his breast, and secured the remaining pistol of his fallen opponent. All this happened with the rapidity of lightning.

"And now, what have you to plead why I should not rid the earth of you this moment? Speak, miscreant!—what mercy have you a right to look for?"

The swarthy dragoon cocked the weapon while he thus spoke, and eyed his truculent foe with a look of the deadliest significance.

The prostrate object of this menacing address, in return, stared with a vacant look, which gradually kindled into astonishment, and almost joy, in the face of the stranger; and after a brief interval of a second or two, in a tone which bespoke the extremity of wonderment and surprise, he replied by a few hurried sentences, and, as it seemed, of vehement interrogatory, in the Irish tongue.

"Hey day!" cried the officer, rising hastily, so as to relieve the defeated combatant, and drawing himself up to his full height, and folding his arms, he coolly looked down upon the swollen and bloody face of the *soi-disant* militia-man, with a smile, or a sneer—it might be either—while he calmly added—

"I little expected to have met *you* here, Mr. Hogan. Get up, and shake thyself, man; this is but child's play, compared with what we have both encountered in other countries. You were not wont to be so easily upset, though, sooth to say, you seem to have had a tolerably heavy buffet."

"I've met my master, that's all," said the fellow, as he pressed his broad hand upon the wound he had just received, and then looked gloomily upon the blood which covered his fingers; "but no matter; I take it in good humour; and, as you say, it's not the first time I've seen the colour of my own blood."

"Not the first, but marvellously nigh being the last!" rejoined the tall soldier, contemptuously. "Get up, sirrah, and begone! I spare you for the sake of former acquaintance; though, as you well know, your pranks in Flanders would have been better requited by a rope's-end, the wheel, or the gibbet, than thus. Up, sirrah, and depart!"

So saying, he discharged the pistol among the trees, and handed the smoking weapon to the wounded man, who had now arisen, crestfallen and bloody, from the ground.

"There—take it! and let me see you walk down yon pathway as far as the eye can follow," continued he, sternly; "and for old acquaintance sake, I tell you, that if I see you attempt to load again, or even so much as stop to look back upon me, I will send a leaden messenger after you, straight enough to find you even through a key-hole. What I say, I say—and so good night."

"Short courtesy—short courtesy, sir," rejoined the fellow; "but it's all one to me. It was your way when you were little more than a boy; and soft talk doesn't come with years and hard knocks. But, never mind, I owe you no grudge for this night's work, and mean you no wrong. So good night, and no harm done."

Having thus spoken, the ill-favoured personage in the blue laced coat turned upon his heel, and strode rapidly down the little path, without once turning or pausing upon his way, until he was lost among the deepening shadows and thickening brushwood in the distance.

"And what has become of the girl?" exclaimed the dragoon.

"I had well nigh forgotten her. Ha! by the mass, swooned or dead! I trust the villain has not hurt her!"

In truth the poor girl, terrified by the peril from which she had but just escaped, and scared and shocked by the scene of violence—the first she had ever witnessed—which had been enacted in her presence, but the moment after, had indeed lost all consciousness, and sunk in utter insensibility at the foot of the oak tree, against which she had leaned for support.

From the shallow river brink he took water in his hand, and throwing back the crimson hood, he dashed it in her face; and as consciousness slowly returned, he had ample leisure to admire that miracle of beauty. Pale as monumental marble were the matchless features, round whose beautiful stillness wantoned her rich golden ringlets in the fitful breeze of evening—her small and classic head rested on the high knotted roots of the old oak tree, all unconscious, and nothing dreaming of dangers, bygone or to come; and in the perfect features, and the softly oval face, moveless though they were, there reigned a look so sweet, so heavenly, and withal so noble, that she seemed an existence too guileless, pure, and lofty for this earth, a native of another sphere, a messenger of preternatural grace and goodness, arrested in her beautiful and bounteous wanderings, even in the wild wood where she lay, by some too potent magic locked in enchanted slumbers. And he, the handsome stalworth warrior, who bends over her with haughty brow and eyes of fire, might seem the predestinated champion, chosen and appointed from his birth to break the spell of the enchanter's power, and set the heavenly captive free again. He watches her with a fixed stern look, in which is seen something of wonder and admiration, as well there may; for in all his wanderings in foreign lands and splendid courts, it never yet has been his fortune to behold a face that could compare with that on which he gazes now. Yes! the spell is broken—the glow of life returns, in the faintest, finest tint; like the first blush of the coming morning, it steals over her death-like cheek, and gently flows into her parted lips in ruddier streams; and now the long dark lashes tremble, and now she sighs from the very depths of her innocent true heart; and now her eyes are opened—beautiful eyes! dark, lustrous, soft—she looks around in wild alarm; and now she remembers all—she essays to rise—she draws her mantle closely round her, and glances round in fearful haste, but the dreaded form is no longer there, her defender stands beside her, and she knows that she is safe.

"The darkness of night is fast descending—you may have far to go," said he gravely and respectfully, after a pause of a few minutes had allowed her time fully to recover her scattered recollections. "Pardon me, when I say it were meet for you to pursue your way as speedily as may be; you shall have my protection until you have passed this dangerous cover. You are still faint—prithee lean upon my arm. So your path lies this way—'tis well, then, our way lies together."

Thus speaking, he led the beautiful and trembling girl through the pathway she had that evening so joyously traced; and side by side in silence they reached the road, and stood upon the antique bridge—his good steed following in his master's steps with the submissive docility and affection of a well-trained dog, now snuffing the crisp grass by the path-side, and now with cocked ears and glowing eyes lifting his head to catch some distant sound.

Never, since the five tall arches of Glindarragh bridge first rose from the dark flashing waters of the chafing stream, did its gray battlements enclose two nobler and more handsome forms. Never yet did glittering court or gay saloon behold a pair so meetly matched for grace and stately beauty, as did that wildly-wooded steep old bridge in Munster: and never yet was beauty of two different orders more gracefully contrasted, than in the youthful soldier and the fair girl, on whom, as side by side they traversed the broken road, the last flush of the glorious sunset fell in soft splendour. He so tall, so dark, so stern—his glossy black hair flowing to his shoulders—his face colourless, except for the clear olive tint, which might have almost become a Moorish prince, so clear and dark was its hue—his eyes so full of speaking fire—his mouth so finely chisseled and so stern, darkly surmounted with that grim moustache—can human face wear a haughtier, sterner beauty than reigns in his? While she, poor fluttered Grace—her noble brow shaded by the rich curls of her hair—her face so soft, so exquisitely turned—as full of varying dimples as the wimpling sunny tide that flows so gently by them—flushed with the mantling glow of agitation—hangs on his arm, tremblingly, modestly, yet with the ineffable loftiness of true nobility, and all the pride of artless purity. Thus they move side by side, the very types of sternness and of softness, of protection and dependence, of strength and weakness: nay, the contrast was not less striking even in their dress—he elaborately attired in all the gorgeous and splendid habilaments of martial equipment, according to the punctilious but magnificent style of those days, and she with but a simple hood and cloak of red cloth thrown hastily over her dress.

They had now reached the centre of the ancient bridge, and the soldier paused, as the dusky towers and battlements of Glindarragh Castle rose in their grim and massive proportions before him.

"Can these be—are they," he said, after a breathless pause, "the towers of Glindarragh?"

The lady assented.

"These—*these*, then, are the towers of Glindarragh," repeated the tall soldier, with an expression of deep and melancholy interest, as he gazed fixedly upon the ancient fabric. "Glindarragh Castle, the ancient home and rightful property of the banished O'Briens."

He paused for a few moments in silent contemplation of the building, and then, with a sigh, he suddenly turned to resume his way.

"Where does your home lie?" he inquired, in a saddened tone. "I would fain see you in safety beneath its shelter; the times are perilous, and the night draws on."

"Glindarragh castle is my home, sir," said the girl, with simple dignity.

"And *you?*" said he quickly.

"I am Sir Hugh Willoughby's only daughter," she rejoined proudly, while she raised her head, and the hood falling backward left her golden ringlets to the rising night-wind.

The dark cavalier instinctively withdrew his arm and recoiled a pace or two, while a swarthier glow for a moment crossed his haughty countenance; and as the fair girl marked his ungracious action, and looked in his stern and now almost forbidding countenance, she felt, she knew not why, a pang of wounded pride, a feeling something akin to humiliation, disappointment, and even to sorrow. Turning haughtily from her, he drew near the battlement of the bridge, and raising his powerful voice, he halloed for some one to approach. The summons being answered, and the sound of the advancing steps being audible in the distance, he turned again toward the half-offended girl, and said, with the extremest coldness, and even severity—

"I have now done a soldier's duty—you are safe, and here I leave you in the care of your own people. Spare your thanks for those who can accept them, as for me I will not. What I have done, I would do again for you or for another as freely as just now. I ask for it no acknowledgment but this, that you tell Sir Hugh Willoughby, from me, that I neither intended a favour nor accepted thanks—that a long account of a very different kind remains between us still unclosed, and that in these unsettled times, when truth and treason are brought sternly to the test, he may perchance hear again of Torlogh Dhuv O'Brien."

As he thus spoke, the light breeze blew the curls from his forehead, and the grim omen, the triple scar, deeply sunk in his bold and lofty brow, for the first time met her eyes. With a slight and haughty salutation he raised his plumed hat, and as the messenger from the castle reached the spot, he sprang into his war-saddle, struck the spurs into his horse's flanks, and in a moment the hereditary enemy of her father's house was out of sight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEUD OF THE COUSINS, SHOWING THAT GRAY LOCKS DO NOT ALWAYS MAKE COOL HEADS—AND THAT A BLACK HEART MAY BEAT UNDER A RED MANTLE.

While Grace Willoughby was lightly crossing the old bridge of Glindarragh, upon the eventful ramble whose adventures we have just recounted, and at a distance of some half dozen miles from the scene of our last chapter, there occurred an accidental meeting between persons strikingly contrasted in many respects. Two old roads, one descending the precipitous front of a furze-clothed rocky hill, the other sweeping round its base, among stunted sloes and hawthorn trees, which skirt the banks of a wayward trout stream, converge at a point where the brawling rivulet is overspanned by a steep old bridge, whose grey battlements rustle with a luxuriant mantle of ivy, darkened under the shadow of clustering bushes. Over this stream the united roads are carried by the bridge, and thence along the lower country, under a double row of ash and elm trees. Descending the steepest of these roads, toward the bridge, rode a cavalier, followed by a mounted servant: the gentleman was advanced in years—perhaps a winter or two past sixty, as nearly as one might guess; his countenance was bold, frank, and imperious—his features somewhat high and marked—his eye keen grey, shadowed by a thick, grizzled eyebrow—his figure was portly, but firm and robust; he wore a dark-green coat, cut in the cumbrous fashion of the time, with huge cuffs rolled back to the elbow, showing abundance of shirt sleeve and ruffles, and all richly overlaid with gold lace—a pair of huge jack-boots encased his legs, the folds of a laced cravat fluttered upon his breast, and from under his broad-leafed hat the curls of a handsome peruke escaped in masses upon his shoulders. He bestrode a tall, well-trained hunter of iron grey; and his saddle was covered with red plush, trimmed with gold. In a word, his equipment was that of a country gentleman of wealth and worship in his day; and his aspect and bearing those of a man accustomed to be heard with deference; and, perhaps, too little habituated to restrain the impulses of a somewhat fiery and impatient temper.

Moving toward the same point, at the same time, by the lower road, and, unlike the gentleman in the green suit, unattended by a servant, rode a lean, athletic man, with a hooked nose, dark prominent eyes of piercing black, a sallow complexion, and a certain unpleasant expression of mingled energy and meanness, it might be treachery, in his face, which gave it a character, at once repulsive and intimidating. He wore a mantle of dusky red, which seemed to have seen much service; and in all respects, except in the quality of his steed, had he been studying how best to mark his contempt for those proprieties of fashion, which the elder cavalier seemed so carefully to cultivate, without descending into absolute slovenliness, he could not have succeeded more admirably. This is the identical sallow, sharp-featured man, who, three years before, upon a certain moonlight night, was leaning over a map, in that rich London saloon into which we have already looked.

As the elderly gentleman cautiously walked his horse down the steep descent, he suffered his eye to wander moodily over the broad landscape: an undulating plain of many miles' extent, bounded by a range of blue hills, softened and dimmed in the haze of evening, and clothed with misty wood in many a sweeping line, and irregular mass, while the winding river, between its bosky banks, shone like burnished gold in the sunset glow, in which all the broad scenery was steeped; and while thus listlessly employed, his attention was arrested by the ringing tramp which announced the approach of the other horseman. He looked first carelessly toward the advancing figure—then again more jealously—and at length, with a darkened brow, and a scornful smile, he averted his gaze, and muttered—

"My pious, mass-going kinsman—so stead my fortune, I had as lief meet his brimstone master, the honester devil of the two; if he have any shame or grace left, he'll try to avoid me."

Had the speaker been able to dive into the bosom of that ill-favoured cavalier, he would have found within the polluted and fiery depths of that moral Gehenna, somewhat to kindle into fiercer flame, the smouldering fires of bygone feuds—and mayhap to darken his bold heart with the shadows of dismay—he would there have read the fearful records of subtle, deep-laid, deadly schemes, even now ripe for execution, and already moving toward their purpose—of which he, the unconscious, proud old man—he and his fortunes were the foredoomed sport.

The recognition, as it seemed, was mutual; for the object of this not very complimentary soliloquy checked his steed, as if in momentary indecision; but in that brief interval, a thought which had often before occurred to him, but never until now with practical effect—a strange and sudden thought, smote with the vividness and power of lightning upon his mind. As if he had resolved that the meeting, from which the other so scornfully and bitterly recoiled, should actually occur, he spurred forward, so as to reach the bridge before the arrival of the elder horseman; who, observing this manœuvre with profound contempt, haughtily determined, upon his part, neither to seek nor to avoid the interview, which his hated kinsman seemed resolved to thrust upon him. It was thus that, as he descended the farther side of the steep bridge, at a leisurely walk, he found himself riding beside the cavalier in the red cloak.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby?" said the latter, raising his hat, with a doubtful smile, and stooping with an almost servile salutation.

"Yes, Miles Garrett," said Sir Hugh, turning full upon him with stern abruptness; and fixing himself more firmly in his seat, while he eyed his companion with a look of fiery scorn and defiance, which seemed to threaten the possibility of a collision much sterner than one of mere words; "here I am, sir, what do you, or what can you desire with me?"

Sir Hugh had not raised his voice unduly, and his companion was too cool a diplomatist to notice his looks or his emphasis; he, therefore, continued calmly, but cautiously—

"It is a long time, Sir Hugh, since we have met——"

"Would it were longer—what then?" rejoined the knight, curtly.

"Maybe nothing—and maybe a great deal, Sir Hugh;" replied his kinsman, tranquilly. "Sir Hugh, will you hear me patiently? nay, pardon me when I say it, you *must* hear me. Condemn no man unheard; least of all one who, however remotely, claims kindred with yourself; one, besides, who respects you, who honours you, who wishes you well, and means fairly by you. Sir Hugh, I will be heard in my own defence; you have wronged me deeply, wronged me for years—if you but knew how much, your generous spirit would grieve for the injury, and atone for the injustice. But I seek not to inspire remorse—I ask for no concessions, though, as you will one day learn, *I*, alone, have everything, in this to me most deplorable quarrel, to forgive. But enough—let us look to the future. I am willing to serve you, willing to be your friend—your humble friend, if you will but try me; you shall not need to repent it; on the faith of a Christian man, you shall not——"

"Which faith do you swear by—your old one, or your new?" responded the old man, with a grim sneer.

"If I have changed from what I have been, Sir Hugh, and in more respects than one," rejoined he, "I may not be the worse man now——"

"Truth for once, at least," replied his companion, sullenly.

"I am altered thus far at least for the better, you will allow," replied

Miles Garrett, with unruffled but earnest calmness, while he stealthily scanned, in the lines of his companion's countenance, the effect of his words; "I am, at all events, improved in this, that I can now command the self-denial to seek an interview like this—the humbleness to bear with whatever reception you may please to accord me—and the patience to submit to suspicion and affront, from *you*, without resentment. This, Sir Hugh, you will acknowledge is a change—and an alteration for the *better*, too."

"Well sir, and what then?" rejoined the knight, in a tone which, though far from courteous, was still somewhat less austere.

"Merely that I am prepared, come what, come may, to try this one cast more for peace," rejoined Miles Garrett; "that I am willing to encounter the mortification and disgrace of repulse and rejection, rather than leave one chance of reconciliation untried. Did I court your favour or friendship, Sir Hugh, when your friends were in power, your prosperity unclouded, your prospects secure? No—but now that matters are in some sort reversed—now that your star has set, and mine burns high and unclouded—now that I have, I care not to conceal it, powerful friends, and prospects which, were I an ambitious man, might well have dazzled me, in this my hour of fortune—when malice cannot conceive, nor ingenuity invent a motive for the act, but the single purpose of having all the past forgotten and forgiven—variance reconciled, and discord reduced to harmony,—I come to proffer you the free use of whatever interest I command—to tender you my services, whenever and however they may stand you in stead—and to offer you——" he was on the point of saying, 'my hand,' and of suiting the action to the word; but fearing to hazard so bold an experiment so soon, he checked himself, and concluded—"and to offer you, in a word, my poor friendship, and all that such an offer can imply."

"Miles Garrett, you are my kinsman, as you say," replied Sir Hugh, speaking hesitatingly, and for the first time in a tone which did not indicate actual bitterness of feeling; "there is no denying that—my cousin in the second degree; and I will go with you so far as to say, that it were better that peace were between us, if so it may be, than strife; nay more, it seems to me your offers look fair, and if you *mean* not fair as well as speak so, I profess I cannot comprehend thee; but—but"—and the old man paused.

How much amiss is silence read at times even by the craftiest men. The thickening twilight obscured the subtle lines in whose varying expression the younger man, as he from time to time eyed his companion askance, had read the feelings which worked within him; this silence, therefore, he read favourably, and forbore to interrupt it.

"The honest knight," thought he, "is pondering deeply of my offer —even now, perchance, considering how he shall first and best employ my proffered interest; but soft, good, easy man, there's a condition tacked to the covenant I offer; we do not, at our years, make such splendid presents as those I have named wholly without a purpose."

But meanwhile, through the mind of the old man were flitting, recollections, obscured but for a moment—scenes charged with black suspicions, inspiring terrible revenge—doubts, whose force shook his very heart within him—and lastly rose before him the chamber, where, in the direst hour of his dark despair and agony, he and the very man who now rode by his side, grappled and tugged in mortal conflict, until both rolled weltering on the floor—the faces of the scared friends who forced asunder the murderous combatants—all the circumstances of the hideous fray rose up before him, like an exhalation from the pit, and with them swelled within him a storm of fiery passions, long dormant, not forgotten—stung as by an adder, he struck his spurs rowel deep into his horse's flanks, and curbing him as furiously, the strong steed bolted and reared.

The scene which memory had evoked, dissolved and vanished in an instant; but the impressions it had revived remained fixed, stern, and terrible. Suffering the chafed beast to regain his composure as best he might, the old knight sate fixed and silent as a statue of bronze, while his companion, resuming his place by his side, rode silently forward for some time, awaiting the further conversation of the elder gentleman. Finding that they were traversing the time and space which measured their distinct companionship, without any attempt on the part of Sir Hugh to renew the conversation, begun, as he conceived, so auspiciously, Miles Garrett resolved himself to break the silence, and in the full conviction that the weighty considerations which he had suggested, were not lost upon the mind of his bluff companion, he thus pursued his imaginary advantage—

"How strange and wayward is the course of thought—how unlooked for the suggestions of the memory—how unbidden and mysterious the rising, as from the grave of years, of slumbering recollections, to upbraid and soften the wayward heart of man."

He spoke, as if in contemplative soliloquy—his words, however, and the sentiment which they conveyed, jarred with painful and sudden coincidence upon the old man's ear—they came like a sneering commentary of the fiend, mocking with an odious parody of truth, the remembrances which had just risen within his own mind, blasting and fiery, as if ascending from the nethermost abyss of hell. Almost with a start, he turned full upon the speaker, and held his breath, well nigh expecting to see the infernal reader of souls himself beside him; and inwardly convinced, that if he were come incarnate in the human shape, to work him mischief, he could not have chosen a more appropriate form for such a mission, than that of his long detested and all but dreaded kinsman.

"I remember once," continued Miles Garrett, "and I scarce know how the remembrance has been now recalled; it is in my memory, that you once said, before the fatal quarrel which has for so long estranged us, had begun, and while we yet lived in interchange of confidence, and the free flow of natural affection—I remember you said, you earnestly prayed heaven there might subsist between our descendants, the same close and friendly intercourse which then held us together. The recollection of this passing phrase, which may, perchance, long since have faded from your memory, has often times returned to mine, yea, even when the feud was hottest and fiercest between us, and ever with this recollection came the thought—this prayer may be even yet fulfilled."

He paused for a moment, and then resumed with greater animation.

"Ay, and lately with growing frequency and strength; with power, even to controul my plans and actions—to balk self-interest, and disarm what others might have thought a just revenge—I speak of my claim at law, to the wood and manor of Glindarragh—let it not move you—nay, I mean not to pursue it; despite the advice of learned counsel—it is foregone. I boast not of this remission of my claim; you may think my title bad—others thought differently; but, be it good or bad, it is all one to me, I never mean to press it; it is, indeed, to all intents and purposes a nullity, so let that pass, and come we now to other matters, nearer to my heart than ever that was."

They were now approaching that point of the road where their respective ways again diverged, and the same certainty of immediate separation, which, sustained by something of curiosity, enabled Sir Hugh Willoughby to tolerate in silence the companionship of his artful cousin, urged the latter with the greater precipitancy to open himself fully, and without reserve; he, therefore, collecting himself for what he well knew would prove the crisis of the conference, summoning at once all his caution and his firmness, for he was, by no means, deficient in personal or moral courage—thus pursued his diplomatic discourse:—

"In a word, Sir Hugh Willoughby, I am your kinsman, therefore you will admit of no unworthy blood. I am, moreover, hereditarily your friend. I am so at this moment, by earnest disposition, by the desire to serve, or rather, Sir Hugh, to *save* you, if you will but give me leave; I am, besides, what the world calls rich. I vaunt not my wealth, but even *you* will allow it considerable. I possess, besides, claims which if pushed, must necessarily become troublesome. Observe me, however, I do not mean to push them—troublesome, certainly, perhaps perilous. I am, also, your neighbour; and in addition to all this, Sir Hugh, what touches the present matter nearly, your junior, by full twelve years. Here, then, you have a man, rich, friendly, well born, not without credit in high places, and, moreover, not an old man, as you well know, offering to make, in these perilous times, a close alliance with your house—an alliance, Sir Hugh, it had best be spoken plainly, and at once, by marriage. I, Miles Garrett, offer myself as suitor for your daughter's hand."

Sir Hugh Willoughby wheeled his horse almost across the narrow road, and while his heart swelled within him, almost to bursting, and his massive frame trembled with ungovernable fury at this most unexpected master-piece of audacity, he stared at the unabashed delinquent with a scowl of the fiercest wrath.

"My daughter!—my daughter!—to you!" at last he muttered, in accents almost choked with fury—"to you, a scoundrel whose very presence I could scarce bring myself for one forgetful moment to tolerate—whose very name I execrate: traitor to your friends, apostate from your God, consummate miscreant, monster and destroyer, dare to pollute my daughter's name once more, and I pistol you that instant where you sit."

CHAPTER VII.

MILES GARRETT'S MESSAGE.

Miles Garrett, though no very impetuous man, was not proof against the torrent of insult and opprobrium, thus suddenly and unexpectedly discharged upon him. The colour fled from his cheeks, and then the tide of rage returning, darkened his face in livid streams, and with a motion as quick as light, he half drew his rapier from its sheath; with a passionate effort of self-restraint however, he dashed it back again, and waiting for an instant to recover his self-possession, rejoined with a hideous sneer:—

"Very well, sir, we'll see who is the loser, you or I—a little time will show; as for me, I take the matter coolly enough, as you see, more calmly even than you do: nor shall you move me, by all your oratory, to raise my voice above its accustomed level, or to draw my sword as others might, in a like case, do against your life. Happily, I have learned to control the foolish impulses of passion, otherwise, fore God! one or other of us should have left his life blood on these stones; we are reserved, therefore, for our respective destinies. These are changeful and perilous times, Sir Hugh; none knows to-day what to-morrow may bring; and so sir, I leave you to your reflections and to your *doom*."

Having uttered this last word with a menacing emphasis and significance, he turned his horse up the road which led toward Lisnamoe, and without looking back again, he rode away at a sharp trot through the overhanging trees, and under the radiance of the moon, which now began to shine in the cloudless sky.

The abruptness of a steep ascent, on a sudden, compelled him to slacken the pace at which he travelled, and instinctively pausing, as the far off clang of the horse-shoe, whose tread was measuring Sir Hugh's retreat, rang faintly upon his ear, he looked down upon the broad plain from the summit of the hillock, and following with his eye, the winding of the river, now shimmering like silver in the moon-light, his gaze at last rested upon a dark mass of building which crested the river's bank, and the summits of whose towers and chimneys were touched in silvery relief by the sailing moon. As he looked upon this distant pile, he drew up his gaunt figure to its full height, and while a bitter smile of infernal spite and triumph lit up his sinister features, made more appalling by the stillness and solitude of the surrounding scenery, he sternly muttered through his clenched teeth, from time to time, such sentences as these:—

"Towers and battlements, high walls and strong gates, grand things all to look upon; but will they keep out wreck and ruin?—will they quash a bill of indictment?—will they free your neck from the halter, or save your lands from forfeiture? Hearth and home, reeking kitchen and glowing hall—pleasant things, Sir Hugh—right pleasant things, with honest faces and safe company—but scarce so pleasant, methinks, with such unbidden guests as may look in on you to-morrow night, to share their jollity. Mill and weirs; barns and dove-cotes; turf and corn, and all the rest of your rich substance, well builded, and long in gathering too, may yet be quickly spent and spoilt, Sir Hugh, as you shall find—you shall; and so you'll learn at last—too late, old dotard—the full and dire effect of your infatuated rashness; frantic possession were its better name. The fool who dashes from his lips the one specific which has power to drive the poison from his veins, and save him—is a sage, compared with thee. The wretch who, weary of the world, cuts his own throat, is not more obviously his own destroyer than you, in your malignant blindness. Driveller! you have flung from you your last offer of salvation. The chance that by a thousand lucky accidents your good genius this day proffered you—in your immeasurable presumption, and your transcendant folly, you have spurned; and now shall ruin—ruin, in every terrible shape, from every side converging, pour down on you and yours, till there remains not, of all your wealth, and pride, and insolence, a wreck or vestige. My sword, Sir Hugh, spared you to-night, that I might launch at your house and life a vengeance so stupendous, that it will hurl you and your fancied greatness, like a thunder-blasted tower, into dust."

He lifted his arm for a moment in an attitude of menace, and in the next he was once more, and at a rapid pace, pursuing his solitary night ride.

As Miles Garrett followed his homeward way through the misty shadows flung by wild hedges and straggling timber across the narrow road, he passed the tall, lean figure of a female, wrapt in a cloak of red cloth; her lank form was curved with age or bodily deformity; she carried a staff of blackthorn in her bony hand, but less, as it seemed, for support than for effect, for she often smote the stones of the road, and often the stooping boughs of the overhanging wood in malignant wantonness, as it seemed, while she advanced with long and leisurely strides over the unequal road; her hood flapped in the light breeze, and occasionally disclosed a sharp hooked nose and the bowl of a short tobacco pipe, from which she drew thin clouds of the narcotic vapour which perfumed the chill night air.

As the grim horseman rode by, almost grazing her shoulder with his jack boot, so closely did she keep the centre of the narrow road, she whined a mendicant petition, which degenerated into a fierce and bitter curse, as he, sullen and unheeding, pursued his way.

"Wisha! one little penny, Miles Garrett, agra, an' the ould woman 'ill be prayin' for you night and morning, an' may—it's never mindin' he's keepin', the thatching pincil! Ride away, an' the widdy's curse behind you—you black, ill-lookin', lean, unlucky scoundrel; may the garron come down an' crack your long neck in the piper's quarry, you yellow nigger! an' if you ever get back may you carry the Phooca home on your shoulders—you shkamin', double-tongued, poison-faced dog, you. Oh! blur an' agers! it's stoppin' you are, is it?—an' it's plenty iv stoppin' an' standin' I wish you this blessed night. Turnin' round, is it?—may you never find the way home, you down-lookin' villian; doesn't the world know you, what sort you are?—as bad as your murdherin' ould cousin, Willoughby, the hangman;

bad luck to every mother's skin iv you, seed, breed, an' generation—the bloody pack iv yez—may ye be cuttin' one another's throats, it's all yez are fit for. Aia! by jabers, what's that? It's beck'nin' he is—its changin' your tune you are, afther all, is it?"

As she thus spoke, she quickened her pace, and advanced to meet Miles Garrett, who was now slowly retracing the intervening space which he had lately passed at so sharp a pace.

"Peg Maher!" he said, gruffly, as he approached, "is that Peg Maher?"

"Ah, then, who else id be in it, agra?" she responded, with a whine, "it's the poor widdy, sure enough, wid no one to help her but the fatherless innocent, that's more in her way wid his thricks an' his nansense, God help him, than anything he's good for. the crathur."

"There—there's a shilling," he interrupted, in the same gruff tone, as he dropped the coin into her hand.

"Wisha! my blessin' an you night an' mornin', Miles Garrett, acushla," said she, as she glanced from the coin, which glittered on her smoke-dried palm, into the face of the donor, with an undisguised expression of wonder and curiosity; "The widdy's blessin' be about you an' yours this night."

She looked inquiringly in his face, for he had reined in his horse, and now sate motionless in his saddle, gazing upon her with a scowl of profound and, as it seemed, malignant thought.

"Peg Maher," he continued, abruptly, after a pause of some seconds, "I'll make that shilling a crown, if you do a message for me safely."

"Begorra, it's a far message, an' a heavy one, the poor widdy would not carry for a crown piece, Misther Garrett, agra," she rejoined, with alacrity; "an' for safity, just lave that to myself—that's all."

Without heeding her, he muttered, thoughtfully, "it mustn't be to Willoughby himself—the hot-headed old bully might frighten the hag into confessing whom she had it from—no, his right-hand man will answer better;" and turning to the old woman again, he said, in a changed tone, "you must tell old Tisdal, of Drumgunniol—observe my words, old woman—that his own house and Glindarragh castle will be rifled and burnt on tomorrow night, unless he and Willoughby gather their friends—you understand me—and defend themselves; just say so much, and no more. If you mention one word of your having seen or met with *me*, you had better make up your mind to quit the country, for I'll undoubtedly make it too hot to hold you—do you understand me, witch?"

"An' how could I but ondherstand you, darlin' gentleman?—to be sure I do," rejoined she; "never spake to Peg Maher, if I don't carry the message right. That's enough—honour bright, and no deludin'."

Without further interchange of words, Miles Garrett flung the broad silver piece upon the road before her, and rode rapidly away. She picked up and examined the coin in the moonlight, and ringing her earnings together in her joined hands, she wagged her head exultingly, and, with a chuckle, muttered, as she watched the receding form of the horseman—

"A crown an' a shilling, aisy airned, by gannies, an' for nothin else but mischief, as sure as my name's Peg Maher; for wherever it lies, an' whatever it mains, I know by his face, an' I know by his nature, there's mischief *galore* in Dark Garrett's message. Let them fall out, the blacker the better; let them be plundherin' an' murdherin' aich-other, an' *caed mille faltha;* they robbed an' slaughtered *us* long enough, an' now, like the wild dogs, when there's no more left for them to tear an' devour, they only turn an one another." She sat down on the bank by the road side, and continued, in a changed tone, "Oh! Shamus, mavourneen, did I ever forget you?—don't think it, my darlin', I'm your own Peggy still—your own Peggy bawn, that you married an' loved—that was your young wife for two years, my darlin'. Did I ever lave you, Shamus, all the time you wor on your keepin'?—wasn't Peggy beside you in the woods of Aherloe, *ma bouchal dhas*, an' did'nt you sleep with your head in her lap on the side of Galty More—oh! cushla machree, an' didn't we dar' the storms together, my darlin'? an' the hunger and could, for Peggy was your first love an' your last; an' when they killed you—killed you, my beautiful, undaunted boy, didn't Peggy—your own Peggy bawn—hould your head on her could knees for a day and a night, the way she used when you were sleepin' in the wild glins an' the mountains, Shamus *laudher ma bohul bra*, with no one but herself to guard you—until the sinses left me, and the neighbours carried me, God knows where, away from my darlin—for, livin' or dead, I'd cling to you, Shamus; and afther your head was laid in the clay—then, when our first child was born, the poor innocent—oh! wasn't my heart hoping I might die in the pains? that I might be with my darlin' again. Oh! Shamus, my husband!—my darlin' thrue-hearted boy! sure I'm thinkin' of you every minute that goes, an' promisin' an' prayin', *my bouchal bragh*, that the time will come round yet, when I'll see your murdherers hunted an' harried from the hills to the woods, an' from the woods to the glins, an' back again—with no shelter from the winter's wind but the mountain carrigs an' the brakes by the bog side; it's comin' yet—it's comin'—I see it comin'!"

She rose hastily, and climbed to the top of the bushy bank which overlooked the road, and as suddenly resuming her wonted accents of harsh and querulous discord, she shrilly called—

"Shaun—Shaun, you big omadhaun, will I never make you folly me. Shaun dhas, will you come, I tell you, or, by gannies, I'll lay this switch across your back."

CHAPTER VIII.

OF PHEBE TISDAL AND HER PURITAN UNCLE—OF THE RUINED ABBEY OF GLINDARRAGH, AND OF THOSE WHO WALKED AMONG ITS GRAVES BY MOONLIGHT.

Meanwhile, Percy Neville, being left to his own devices, donned his hat and gloves once more, and prompted by the curiosity of idleness, loitered forth into the castle yard, and thence through the high-arched, frowning gateway, into the steep road descending toward the old bridge which his fair cousin had so lately traversed. He turned, however, in the opposite direction, and mounting the high grounds which overhung this abrupt declivity, he soon commanded the broad, bold prospect which spread away for many a mile of wood and pasture and heathy bog, in one vast undulating plain, even to the feet of the far-off dim blue hills.

He looked round on this wide landscape with all its softened shadows and sunset glories expanding beneath and around him, and felt the freshening breeze which swept its broad extent, and heard the wild and varied harmony of nature and all the pleasant sounds of rural life. The lowing of kine and the distant singing of maidens floated upward, mingling with the many voices of the river and the hushed melody of the wind, to his rejoicing ear. Shrill, but softly, harped the gray branches of the aged ash, and freshly rustled the thick ivy on the tower walls, in the exulting breeze. The innocent whistlings of the small birds, and the kindly cawings of the soaring crow winging to his far-off retreats in the shadowy wild wood—all filled his senses with unknown delight as he rambled onward, until at last, crossing a low and broken fence, he found himself in the great old orchard, whose overgrown and hoary apple-trees rivalled the monarchs of the forest in size—some half decayed, some by storm or leven blast reft of their lordliest boughs, but all gigantic and picturesque. The sloping ground over which they spread was drawn into furrowed undulations by the rugged gripe of the spreading moss-grown roots, and darkened by the tangled boughs of the ancient fruit-trees, through whose gray and furrowed trunks the ruddy light was solemnly streaming.

The transition from the feelings which we have just attempted to describe, to melancholy, is easy and frequent; and Percy Neville, albeit unused to the melting mood, did feel his heart touched with somewhat of the softness and the sadness of more sensitive and passionate natures, as he rambled onward through the natural cloisters of these huge old trees—a temperament which predisposed him, perchance, to impressions of a sweet and earnest kind, as passing a low mound, which had once divided the extensive orchard into two distinct and independent inclosures, but was now no more than a gentle grassy bank, furrowed, unequal, and clothed in many places with straggling branches, he beheld the scene which we shall now describe.

As he ascended this bank, he heard at the other side, the prattle of voices, and, on looking over, he beheld two or three country girls milking a group of cows, and, farther among the trees, several tattered urchins driving more kine upward, toward the party already gathered there. A group more peaceful, rural, and harmonizing better with his present tone of feeling, could hardly have been presented, yet his eye rested upon it but for a moment. A form, simple and homely in all the accidents of dress and ornament, but, as it seemed to him, surpassing in grace and loveliness all that he had ever yet beheld, stood close before him, and a little aloof from the rest—it was the figure of a maiden—very young she seemed—perhaps seventeen years had passed over her, but no more; her small classic head was quite uncovered; her hair was dark, dark brown, and soft and glossy as the finest silk—its rich folds gathered at the back by a small golden bodkin, and parting in front over her artless and beautiful forehead. Hers was a countenance, once seen to be long remembered—not so much, perchance, for the exquisite symmetry of its features, peerless as they were—nor for the dark, melancholy eyes, which, full of beautiful expression, looked from beneath the shadow of her long lashes in such deep, soft eloquence—as for the matchless and ineffable grace and sadness that pervaded every look of that pale and lovely face; a saddened radiance from the innocent, deep, warm heart dwelt in its pale beauty; in its loveliness, trembled the loveliness of her own guileless affections, and, smiling or pensive, in every change of her sensitive face—and they were ever varying, as the gently sparkling dimples of some shadowy, wild well—there spoke the same deep, tender loveliness—the same touching harmony of beauty and expression, which moved the heart with pity, joy, and melancholy—softly, as might the thrilling strain of some sweet, old song. The grace and elegance of her form accorded meetly with the beauty of her face: tall, slight, and exquisitely symmetrical—a gracious gentleness and modesty, a simple dignity and ease moved in her every action, and made every gesture and attitude beautiful. She wore a red cloak of finer cloth than that employed by the peasant girls in theirs; and one of her small and slender feet, enclosed in a high shoe, buckled across the instep, was shewn a little in advance of the drapery of her mantle, as she stood listening to the melody which one of the girls was singing while she plied her task.

"Beautiful—beautiful creature!" said Percy Neville, as he gazed upon this unexpected apparition.

He was not, however, long an undetected spectator of this simple group. His presence was quickly perceived, and the song and the laughing gossip were hushed, while all eyes were turned wonderingly upon him. Merrily be descended the grassy bank, and with gay good humour dissipated the momentary constraint which his approach had obviously produced; and so, ere a minute had well elapsed, the merry voices and merrier laughter were mingling pleasantly as before. Good-humouredly he complied with the laughing solicitation of a buxom, barefoot girl, and from the "noggin" she presented, tasted the warm new milk, and then with provoking special pleading, affected to resist the unanimous decision, that he must pay his footing; which at last he did, however, and with a liberality which raised him at once to the pinnacle of popularity.

But while all this was passing, the object which alone had interested him, the beautiful girl, ere he had yet exchanged one word with her, while for a moment his eyes were turned another way, had withdrawn—was gone. He looked round in the pettishness of disappointment, and mentally wishing the whole party—we need not say where—he climbed the green bushy bank again, and saw a little before him, greatly to his comfort, the retreating form of the graceful girl in the cloak, as she pursued the path toward the castle, among the knotted branching roots and lichen-covered trunks of the old trees, through whose devious arcades the dusky golden light was streaming. In a moment he was at her side.

"Pretty maiden," said he, with something at once of gaiety and respect, "are you going to Glindarragh Castle?"

"I am, sir," she answered gently.

"And so am I," he continued gaily, "and with your permission I shall walk beside you—that is, if you have no objection," he hesitatingly added.

She looked surprised, then slightly blushed, and with a gentle smile which showed a little even row of pearly teeth, she said, with a beautiful embarrassment and simplicity—

"Oh no, sir, I'm sure I couldn't; you're very welcome, sir, to go with me."

"Many thanks and true ones, my fair maiden, for saying so," he replied. "And what may your business be in that dismal old place, and so near the nightfall too?—are you not afraid to walk alone at dusk among these lonely places?"

"No, sir," she answered, with a melancholy smile—"no harm ever happened me, and I'm not afraid; I am going up to the castle, to the young lady; she is very good, sir—oh, very good; she was always kind to me, and likes me to be with her."

"And where does your father live?" inquired he, with increasing interest.

"My father is dead, sir," she answered, with melancholy gentleness.

"And your mother," he added, in a softer tone.

'She is dead, sir; I have no mother, and no father," she answered, mournfully.

"An orphan, so young, so very beautiful!" he thought, as he looked with a deep emotion of pity upon the girl.

"And have you no brothers or sisters?" he inquired.

"No, sir; I never had brother or sister; my mother died when I was a little child, and my father soon after. I scarce remember them," answered she, encouraged by the obvious interest with which her replies were listened to. "This is the way, sir," she continued, as she turned the key in a little wicket which opened from the orchard into the garden of which we have already spoken.

Entering its shadowy hedges with a sigh, Percy Neville continued—

"And you, pretty maiden, what may be your name?"

"Phebe, sir, Phebe Tisdal," she answered modestly.

"And have you no kindred, my pretty Phebe—no relations to take care of you, and to love you?"

"I have an uncle, sir. I live with him at Drumgunniol, where I was born," she answered.

"Well, my pretty Phebe," said he, as they reached the little sally port, which gave admission from the garden to the castle yard, "I hope I shall often see you while I remain here, and if ever the time shall come when you need a friend, remember Percy Neville."

The young man spoke, perhaps, with a deeper earnestness than he intended, and the girl looked up in his face, with an expression of wonder in her deep, soft, dark gray eyes, and encountering his bold gaze of admiration, she lowered them again with a heightened colour, and an expression at once of pain and sadness. Their *tete-a-tete* was now ended, and we shall leave them for a time to turn to that quaint dwelling-house of Drumgunniol, of which the beautiful Phebe Tisdal has just spoken in her own sad silvery accents.

On the same day, at the same sunset hour, a short, bow-legged, square-built man, appearing some years in advance of three score, with a large, deeply furrowed, and somewhat pimply face, a massive nose of glowing purple, two small, gray, squinting eyes, and a countenance expressive, in no ordinary degree, of gloom, determination, and ferocity, passed forth into the open country, having carefully latched the gate which gave admission to his narrow farm-yard, compassed by a high wall and strong stone-built offices on three sides, and closed upon the fourth by a tall, narrow, and massively constructed stone dwelling-house of three stories high, with chimney-stacks as ponderous as watch-towers, rising at each gable, and flanking, with clumsy but comfortable shelter, the steep, gray, flagged roof of his snug and well-built tenement.

He was dressed in grave-coloured habiliments, somewhat coarse and very rusty, and wore a short black cloak and high-crowned hat, with a very plain and narrow rim of shirt collar, lying flat upon the neck of his doublet. In his broad and muscular hand, which might more meetly have grasped a halberd or a musquetoon, he carried a crutch-handled cane; and as he pursued his way, his pace was firm and deliberate—nay, even pompous—though the masculine and sinister character of his somewhat bloated visage, which carried upon it the legible traces of early intemperance, as well as of constitutional daring and sternness, in a very striking and unpleasant degree, effectually qualified any tendency to ridicule, which his consequential gait, and square and ungainly form, as well as his peculiar garb, might else have inspired.

Closing the wicket carefully behind him, as we have said, this figure pursued the winding foot-path which led through the then wooded fields toward the bridge and castle of Glindarragh, which lay somewhere about the long half of an Irish mile away. Ungladdened even for a moment by the rich expanse of sunset scenery which spread before him, the eye of this morose and gloomy man rested, for the most part, upon the ground, as if in sullen contempt of the beauties with which smiling nature greeted his advance—or occasionally darted a quick and jealous glance at either side, as the capricious track which he pursued led him suddenly among closer brushwood, or into the lap of some gentle hollow ; until at last the lonely and shattered ruins of Glindarragh Abbey rose close before him ; its roofless gables and tall stone-shafted windows, and gray ivied walls, ascending from among the fern and nettles, and spreading their long shadows over the sward, showed additionally mournful and solemn in the dim glow of evening, whose level radiance gilded the grass-grown summit of many an humble mound, and turned its gray head-stone to dusky red, and shone and glittered, flashing and glowing like warm fire upon the burnished leaves of the rustling ivy.

As the old man approached these time-worn walls, through which his path wound its devious way, there arose in his imagination sundry conjectures, in which, from congenial association long grown into inveterate habit, he pleasantly indulged as often as he found himself beneath its melancholy shadow. How much of hoarded gold, of ancient plate, of jewelled reliques, might lie deep and dark under the foundations of that deserted pile, hidden in the season of danger, and deposited by its long-exiled and scattered owners, secure in leaden chests, and deep in the yellow mould, there to rest untroubled by bar or mattock, until time shall be no more.

Such speculations, though woven of the flimsiest dreams of fancy, had yet an interest, keen and absorbing, for the sombre being who trod the old ruin, and often would he ponder and pause, as he pursued his lonely way, to calculate in what spot the crafty caution of the old monks would most securely, and with least suspicion, have secreted the buried treasure. Such pleasant, though somewhat tantalizing visions, had now again filled his mind, as Jeremiah Tisdal, the puritan proprietor of the grange of Drumgunniol, found himself once more among the silent arches of this ancient building. Slackening his pace to indulge still further these intoxicating ruminations, which stole over his senses like the enchantment of opium, Tisdal looked wistfully, now through some gap in the ruined walls, now into the low arched doorway of some narrow chamber, the use of which, unless for some such purpose as the mysterious one with which his thoughts were busy, he could not divine ; now peering through some tall ivy-wreathed window, and again under some dark and low-browed vault ; and while he thus amused himself, still though loiteringly advancing upon his course toward Glindarragh bridge, his attention was arrested, in a sudden, and by him a most unwished-for manner, by the apparition of a human form.

On looking through a narrow slit into a small chamber, whose roof, less walls fully admitted the light, he beheld, seated near the door- and busily discussing some crusts of bread and an onion, and with a leathern-cased flask beside him, a man whom he instantly recognized, and at sight of whom he felt for a moment so overcome with horror and dismay, that, had the fiend himself risen up before him in that awful place, he could not have been more overwhelmed and paralysed with terror. The man whose sudden appearance had wrought this terrible revulsion in the feelings of the proprietor of Drumgunniol, though not very prepossessing in his outward aspect, was by no means hideous enough to dismay a man of Tisdal's firm nerves. He sat upon a low stone by the chamber-door, his provisions in a blue handkerchief between his knees, and his flask by his side; his clothes were not of the coarse cloth used by the Irish peasantry, but like the cast-off finery of gentility in make and texture, and reduced, by overwear and exposure, to a mass of rags and squalor. This tattered figure was that of a man of middle stature, pale and spare, and rendered peculiarly remarkable by a broad deep scar, which, traversing his visage from the right eye to the corner of the mouth, crossed the nose in its passage, and had reduced the bridge of that prominence to a distorted and unsightly level.

Such a countenance, with its deep and ineffaceable furrow, and partially flattened wry nose, was too remarkable to be easily mistaken or forgotten, and Jeremiah Tisdal, in full recognition, gazed upon it with an aspect almost of despair; while, from his red face—nay even from his purple nose—the blood receded, leaving nothing but a straggling net-work of livid threads, streaking the sallow cadaverous flesh, from whose every pore the cold sweat was starting, to indicate the region where the fiery purple of his visage had most fiercely predominated. With unutterable horror Tisdal continued for a full minute or more to gaze upon the sitting figure, who, wholly unconscious of the absorbing contemplation of which he was the object, continued with undiminished attention and unabated good will to address himself to the homely viands before him. It was with an effort such as that with which the victim of nightmare at length dispels the frightful illusion which has held him in its fascination, that Tisdal withdrew himself from the narrow aperture through which he had beheld this, to his eyes, most terrific spectre, and instinctively pressing his hat down upon his brow, so that the broad leaf shaded his livid features, and muffling the lower part of his face in the folds of his cloak, he strode with rapid and noiseless steps along the pathway.

"O God, merciful and terrible!" he muttered in an agony of desperation, when some three or four hundred yards had interposed between him and the scene of his appalling discovery—"is there then no escape—

no pardon for me? What fearful curse pursues me, that even here, buried in the wild inhospitable recesses of a savage and perilous country, I cannot escape the dreadful doom that pursues me. Gracious God, is not the anguish of remorse, are not the pangs of fear, and the terrible images of memory, torment sufficient, that thou must send thine incarnate avenger, after ten long years, to dog me—to destroy me. Yes; I am accursed of God—forsaken—struggle as I may—given over for ever and ever to the evil one."

He gnashed his teeth in unutterable anguish, and then stamping furiously upon the ground, he abruptly stopped short, and turned fiercely toward the mouldering ruin, which lay in all its solemn and melancholy repose some hundred yards behind him.

"Yes, the die is cast," said he, while the fearful agitation of the moment before gradually subsided, and his face assumed its wonted character of firmness, gloom, and severity; "he has at last driven me to the wall, and one or other of us two must go down. I cannot escape him; the question is merely who strikes first. But—but, after all, it may be but accident. Be it so; I shall bring it to the test—any thing but doubt. Let the crisis come *now*."

He paused again, opened his cloak, and from a buff leathern belt which encircled his doublet, he successively drew two pistols, tried the loading of both with the ramrod, touched the flints, and added a little fresh priming; then replacing them in his girdle, he slowly said—

"He may not know me, changed as I am; he may not seek me, well for him if he do not. I will enter the chamber, and confront him, and if it prove otherwise——"

He said no more, but retraced his steps toward the ruined pile, not quite so rapidly as he had left it, and with a countenance, though less agitated, fully as pale as before, and charged with the black and condensed ferocity of a dark and deadly purpose. Thus resolved, Tisdal walked heavily into the silent ruin, and diverging a little from the beaten path, he entered that part of the building upon which the door of the small chamber, into which he had so lately looked, directly opened. For an instant he paused as he approached the narrow portal, and drew one long breath, like a daring swimmer who stakes his life upon one bold plunge into the prevailing sea, and then firmly and collectedly he entered the roofless apartment. But the decisive interview he courted was not then and there to be. The man whose presence had wrought so fearful a revulsion in all his feelings, was gone; and with a strange sensation, at once of disappointment and relief, he looked around upon the deserted walls, and up and down through the long passages and mouldering chambers of the old building. The search, however, was vain; and though he climbed the winding stair of the tower, and looked down from the ivybowered windows, like some ill-omened bird shrouded from light, and peering forth with malignant eye in search of its proper prey, his scrutiny from hence was alike unrewarded.

Buried in his own stormy and remorseful reflections, this grim and brawny personage seated himself upon the worn steps of the spiral stair, his elbows resting upon his knees, and his heavy chin propped upon his clenched hands, while his eyes, gazing vacantly through the arched window of the central tower which he thus occupied, wandered slowly and gloomily over the narrow cloisters and the spreading yew tree beneath, until gradually the mellow blush of sunset melted into the cold gray of twilight, and that in turn gave place to the misty light of the spectral moon. The solemn ruin, with its buried dead, slumbering in the silence of the night, and under the broad cold moonlight, might well have awakened in the heart of the solitary occupant of the abbey tower some feelings of superstitious awe.

The subsidence of fierce and angry passions is accompanied with a depression and gloom more painful far than the more agitating emotions which have preceded them. In Tisdal's case the stormy feelings of wrath and terror had acquired a sterner and deadlier character from a thousand thrilling and appalling remembrances associated with the apparition which had evoked them, as well as with the black and revengeful suggestions of his own desperation. As these terrible emotions which had so fiercely shaken him, slowly sank to rest, leaving an awful stillness and blank dismay behind them, he felt in his solitude a horror and a fear he had scarcely ever known before—it was as though he had been for an hour and more unconsciously holding close communion with the tempter himself—yielding up his soul to the powers of the evil influence, and had on a sudden emerged from the awful presence and was alone. With a chill sense of undefined fear, which he in vain attempted to dispel—the Puritan arose—glanced quickly and fearfully around him, and descending the narrow stair of the tall grey tower, entered the shadowy cloister, and accidentally encountered as he did so, the old woman, whom Miles Garret had so lately commissioned with the sinister message which she at once proceeded to deliver.

Tisdal, however, with his constitutional suspicion and shrewdness, pressed her sternly but unavailingly with close and searching interrogatories, but seeing that the woman obstinately persisted in an entire disregard of his further questioning, he moodily turned from her, and pursuing the solitary pathway toward Glindarragh Castle, he left the ivied chambers of the ruin to the more congenial occupation of the bats and owls, as well as of the scarcely less ominous sample of humanity with whom he had just held such strange and inauspicious intercourse.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOAT ON THE RIVER—THE MYSTERIOUS WARNING.

WE left Jeremiah Tisdal, with moody mien and steady pace, pursuing his way, under the silvery moonlight, toward the old bridge and castle of Glindarragh. If the puritan had possessed an eye for the picturesque, he might have found in the scene before him matter enough for pleasurable contemplation. His path had now reached the river's bank. Before him wheeled the chafing stream, its foam and eddies glittering like showers and ripples of molten silver in the full radiance of the moon, and over-spanned by the high arches of the steep and antique bridge, showing dark and black against the broad and lustrous current of the stream. On the right, hung the massive and sombre outline of the castle—its towers, roofs, and chimneys piled in one dark frowning mass above the murmuring waters; and on the left, rising from the very verge of the river, and stretching far away over the undulating plain, spread the thickets and branching timber of the wild wood in one broad shadowy mass, among whose hollows and nooks the light vapours of night were slumbering; and far away, melting in the thin shrouds of mist, and well nigh lost to sight, the dim and distant mountains.

But Tisdal had no sense of the merely beautiful; his eyes were busy in the jealous scrutiny of the straggling copse, which, at either side, skirted his path, or in watching and avoiding the difficulties of his broken way. Safe and sound, he stood at last under the shadowy arch of the great gate of the castle, and with a heavy stone battered the iron-studded oak, until tower and forest echoed to the din; while, from the inner yard, his summons was answered by the clamorous challenge of a dozen dogs, baying and barking in furious rivalry.

"What's your business, neighbour?" inquired a gruff voice, through the narrow bow-slit that flanked the gate.

"That voice is Phil Gorman's. Look, man—look at me," rejoined the puritan. "Know you not Jeremiah Tisdal, of Drumgunniol?"

"Aiah, wisha! sure enough—sure enough," replied the porter, in a tone of lazy recognition. "Wait a bit, an' I'll draw the boults this minute, wid a heart an' a half, Mr. Tisdal, I will. Them's quare times," he resumed, after a minute's interval, as, unbarring the small door which was cut in the great gate, he gave admission to the sombre visitant—"quare times, when the ould gate is barred as regular as the night falls—quare times, Mr. Tisdal, when there's need for the likes—and need enough there is, too," he continued, while he barred the door again, as Tisdal walked into the castle-yard—"need enough, an' too much, for it's only to-night our young lady, God bless her, was freckened a'most out iv her senses wid a thievin' rogue—one iv them plundherin' villians that's robbin' an' hangin', an' has no other thrade to live by—divil take the bloody breed iv them—over there in the wood, jist, as I may say, in undher the very walls."

The old man continued to ramble on in the same style, while Tisdal crossed to the door of the great hall, which stood half open at the other side of the yard. He entered this rude apartment, within the canopy of whose mighty chimney sate two or three fellows smoking and chatting listlessly in the flickering light of the wood and turf fire; and hardly pausing for a word of inquiry, he proceeded through several chambers and passages, guided by so much moonlight as could make its way through the narrow windows, until having reached the first landing of a winding stone stair, he knocked at a chamber door, and in the next moment found himself in the apartment of Sir Hugh Willoughby.

The old knight sate in gloomy excitement, still booted and spurred as he had dismounted two hours before, by the expiring fire which smouldered in the ashes of his broad hearth, his high and handsome features fixed in the stern lines of condensed anger, and still glowing with the swarthy fires of outraged pride.

"Ha, Tisdal, gad's my life, you're welcome. Tisdal, what do you think of all this? A strange pass we've come to—eh? when highwaymen and ruffians infest our fields and farms, and hem us into our strongholds—scarce leave us safety in our very dwellings; what think you—but you have heard of it—my daughter was this very evening menaced by an armed scoundrel in the wood yonder, and within sight of these very windows. As I stand here," he continued, starting to his feet, and stamping furiously upon the floor, "had I but met the ruffian this evening, when I sought him yonder with my men, I would, so help me heaven, have set up a gallows on the castle hill, and at my own risk hung him high enough before an hour, to warn his friends for six miles round, that old Hugh Willoughby knows how to deal with villains."

"It's well you do know how, Sir Hugh," rejoined the puritan, coolly, "because it is a knowledge you'll need ere two days more have passed. We're all in danger," he continued, "all—great as well as small; you, Sir Hugh, within your fenced towers, as well as I within my poor farm-house—all in sore peril. Would God we were safely through to-morrow night!"

"Sit down, Tisdal, sit down, man, and speak your tidings plainly," said Sir Hugh. "What hast thou heard, and from whom, to fill thy mind with such fearful auguries? Speak, man."

Tisdal briefly stated the substance of his interview with the crone in the ruined abbey, while the old knight listened with deep and stern attention.

"The channel through which the news hath reached you, Tisdal, alone inclines me much to believe it false," said Sir Hugh, slowly and hesitatingly; "but—but as you say, the burthen of the tale is but too likely to prove true; and that miscreant whose insolence affrighted my child to-day, in his person and attire accords well with what I have heard of certain ruffian adventurers whom these perilous times have tempted into lawless enterprise; there was waiting upon him, too, a wild, savage, Irish boy with a skean. Ay, ay, it may prove even too true. Spies, *spies*, Tisdal, rapparees!"

"Counting the plunder and marking your bulwarks of defence," chimed in the master of Drumgunniol.

"True, true, and—but they shall be defeated; I will show the savage marauders I can maintain my house against them—I will, if it be God's will, against all odds defend my property, my home, and my people."

"'Tis safest ever to act as if a threatened danger were an actual one, and sure to come," replied Tisdal.

"And so will I act, my friend," rejoined the old knight, promptly; "I will prepare for the threatened mischief, leave no precaution untaken, call in my friends and my people, gather my best cattle within the castle walls, bar the gates, man the towers, and then with a firm heart leave the issue to Almighty God."

"Well and wisely said, Sir Hugh," rejoined Jeremiah Tisdal; "and such small portion of my worldly substance as I can conveniently remove, with your permission, I will lodge within these walls, and I and my trusty man Bligh will come hither with such store of arms and ammunition as we can muster betimes in the day; for unless matters turn out smoother than I apprehend, we'll need good store of powder and lead, and that, right well delivered, to hold this place against the odds with which 't will be encompassed."

"Do so, do so, honest Tisdal; and—and let me see, what friends I may I reckon on in this strait," continued Willoughby. "There is Wilson, of Drumboy, too old himself, but his nephew will come, an active, bold young fellow—egad, worth two in himself—he will bring at least one man with him; and then the two Browns, of Lisnagarriff good shots and staunch friends both; and there is Bill Stepney, of Clonsallagh, and his three stout sons—four muskets from Clonsallagh—God grant they may not yet have given them up; and then Garret

Lloyd—odd's life, I must send to him to-night, he starts to-morrow for Clonmel—we can't spare the best duck-shot in the country."

And thus the old knight went on summing up, as nearly as he might, the volunteer contingent, upon whom he might reckon from among his friends and neighbours. But while employed in these hurried and exciting calculations, he was on a sudden interrupted by a noise which startled him and his companion, brought both of them in an instant to their feet, and fixed their astounded gaze upon the window of the apartment in which they stood.

With a stunning crash the casement of the chamber was burst asunder, and a heavy body, which might have been a paving-stone or a hand-grenade, smote with an astounding din, and amid a shower of shattered glass upon the floor and bounded and rumbled to the far end of the room. The old knight stood in amazement, glancing from the shattered window to the missile which now lay quietly settled upon the floor, as if it were a piece of the proper furniture of the apartment. Jeremiah Tisdal meanwhile, with instantaneous promptitude, had planted himself at the aperture, through which the night-wind was now freely and fitfully playing, and stretching forward through the depth of the recess, advanced his bullet head through the casement, and beheld drifting slowly down the moonlit current toward the shadowy bridge, a small boat, usually moored at the opposite side of the stream, and which, as it seemed to him, now contained two dark forms. While Tisdal was employed, as we have described, in scrambling on all fours along the narrow stone window-sill, and keenly searching through the uncertain light for the cause of the strange and startling interruption which had so unseasonably broken in upon their conference, Sir Hugh Willoughby cautiously approached the mysterious projectile which lay upon the floor, half expecting every moment to see it explode, and blow himself and the other occupant of the room to fragments; he turned it over suspiciously with his toe, and alike to his relief and his surprise discovered it to be, after all, but a large smooth stone, with a piece of paper tied firmly against its surface. The paper was addressed—"To Sir Hugh Willoughby, Knight, at his house of Glindarragh Castle;" and in an instant he had disengaged and opened the letter. His eye had no sooner rested upon the character in which it was traced, than every faculty and feeling of his nature became at once absorbed in its perusal. It was briefly expressed in the following terms:—

"Sir Hugh Willoughby—On to-morrow night, Glindarragh Castle will be wrecked, and your cattle and property plundered and wasted. For God's sake, seek not to defend them; save what you can, but fly. If you resist, evils a thousand-fold greater will follow upon you. Your enemies expect you to defend the place; disappoint them—save yourself and your child. Fly! For the sake of your daughter, escape. You are among the toils; if you stay but forty-eight hours more, you are lost. One chance—and but one remains—take it and fly.

"This comes from a friend, long unseen, but too well known."

When the tall, slender character in which these lines were written met the gaze of the old man, he staggered backward, like one who has received a sudden blow—the blood mounted dizzily to his head, and the feeble letters swam in mist before his eyes; then, as suddenly, the fevered tide retired, and pale and heart-sick (though not by reason of the tidings which the letter conveyed, dismaying as they were), he slowly read and re-read the paper.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah Tisdal, having hailed the boat which was gradually floating toward the bridge, but without affecting the motion of those who sat within it, any more than he could have arrested, by his challenge, the foam flakes which drifted by upon the eddies of the stream, drew back from his post of observation, and stood once more upon the floor of the chamber.

"Ha! but a stone and a letter!" said Tisdal, as his eye glanced from the missile and the loosened cord to the paper, upon which the agitated gaze of the knight was fixed. The sound of the puritan's voice aroused Sir Hugh.

"Where are they?—for God's sake, where? Tisdal, call to them—stop them," cried he, distractedly, as he moved, first towards the door, and then towards the window.

"They're under the bridge by this time," said Tisdal; "they are in the small boat, and heeded not my calling."

"Let's after them, in heaven's name, quickly—for your life, quickly," cried the old knight, frantically, as with head uncovered, he rushed from the chamber, followed closely by Tisdal, and down the steep and narrow winding-stair, across the castle-yard, unlocked and unbarred the portal in the great gate with breathless haste, and without exchanging a word with the astounded porter, who, with starting eyes and mouth agape, beheld the breathless and disorderly race in which his master and the puritan seemed to strive which should outrun the other. With a hasty order from Tisdal to watch at the gates they both passed in a moment from the sight of the old dependant, and, panting and breathless, reached the bridge together.

"There they are, as the Lord liveth, there!" cried Tisdal, whose phlegmatic nature was now thoroughly excited by the unwonted and violent exercise in which he had engaged.

"Holloa boat! holloa there!—bring to—stop, I say—turn her in there—stop, or by ——— I fire upon you," shouted the knight, furiously, as he beheld the two figures, instead of obeying his call, poling with all their strength down the rapids.

Swift as an arrow the skiff flew down the rushing stream, until about three hundred yards below the bridge, when they saw the two forms who manned her fling down their poles, and jumping into the shallows, reach the bank, where, in an instant, they were lost among the brushwood; further pursuit was now, of course, out of the question.

"Tisdal," said the master of Glindarragh Castle, in a changed and subdued voice, as he turned from the vain pursuit, "I have had another warning, and such a one as leaves in my mind no doubt of the meditated outrage, of which your message was the first and imperfect intimation. We must now prepare as best we may; be you with me by sun-rise in the morning, and get such of your goods as you can easily remove within the keep of these strong walls. They shall not carry it here as they have done elsewhere, for, although I stood alone, I would defend the old house while I had power to draw a trigger."

He shook the puritan strongly by the hand, and with a stern but friendly good night, they parted.

Sir Hugh hurried across the castle-yard, his heart swelling with a thousand feelings, which none suspected but himself, and hastening into the chamber where he had just held his exciting conference with Tisdal, he locked the door, seized the mysterious note, which lay open upon the table, and kissing it again and again, and pressing it passionately to his heart, he threw himself into his chair, and wept and sobbed like a child.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN BOWSHANKS AND DICK SLASH.

As Tisdal approached the strong and formal farm-house of Drumgunniol, his quick eye was attracted by the glow of an unusually fierce and ruddy fire, streaming from the narrow windows of the kitchen, and flooding the stones and bushes of the opposing hillock with a blush of dusky red, which contrasted cosily with the cold spectral lights and shadows of the misty moonshine—

"By my troth," muttered the master of the mansion, as he drew nigh, "this is but ill husbandry of turf and firewood. Master Bligh, methinks your supper must needs be something of the largest to need so fierce a blaze—this must be seen to—this must be seen to—but, ha! what have we here?"

This sudden ejaculation was caused by the unwonted sounds of profane singing which somewhat boisterously arose from the interior of the mansion; and Tisdal's heart faltered with a dreadful misgiving as this unusual ministrelsy reached his ear. He no longer approached his dwelling with the bold, firm, and consequential step which usually characterised the proprietor of Drumgunniol—he drew nigh rather with the stealthy caution of a thief, prowling fearfully about some rich man's house, cowering from view, and dreading even the sound of his own cautious foot-falls. Thus did Jeremiah Tisdal draw near to his kitchen-window, avoiding the light which poured from the casement, and scarcely daring to breathe lest his presence should be detected. When he looked in, his worst fears were at once realised. Seated in the chimney-corner, with a mug of stout home-brewed ale beside him, while he carelessly chopped and shredded a pipe full of tobacco on the table, sate the identical tattered and ill-favoured traveller, whose appearance had so fearfully disconcerted him in the ruin but a few hours before. The stranger was singing with a loud voice and a rollicking air, one of the low licentious ballads of the day, to which, with shame and confusion of face be it written, the saintly Master Praise-God Bligh appeared to listen from the opposite corner with a great deal of sly and quiet relish. Tisdal drew back from the window in extreme trepidation; he smote his clenched hands upon his breast and ground his teeth in bootless rage and despair; again he peered like a skulking spy into his own comfortable kitchen, and again withdrew in anguish and desperation into the darkest recesses of the high-walled yard.

Meanwhile the ballad ended, and Praise-God Bligh walked forth to bolt the strong oak shutters upon the outside of the window. He had hardly entered the open yard when he was confronted by his master—

"Come hither, sir," said Tisdal, in a stern harsh whisper, while he dragged the astonished domestic under the shadow of the stable wall. "How dare you, idiot—how dare you suffer that man within my house?" he whispered, with such vehemence and fury that the froth found its way through his clenched teeth and gathered upon his lips. "Dog, do you hear me? Your life—your life hangs on your answer," he continued, while he shook the terrified servant by the throat. "How came you to admit that—that—*man* within my house—are you drunk or moon-struck—answer, *how?*"

"Deal patiently I pray thee with thy servant," muttered the domestic, terrified no less at the unwonted violence of his master than at the expression of preter-human rage and agony which blackened his terrific countenance; "hear me—for God's sake, hear me, and loosen your hold of my throat—pray—pray good master, patience and do but hear me."

"How came you to admit that person within my house?" reiterated the master of Drumgunniol.

"I will tell you all about it if you will but loosen your hold," replied the servant entreatingly.

"Speak, then, and plainly, or by Him that made me you'll have cause to rue it," retorted Tisdal, with stern deliberateness.

"Hear me, then, and may I die the death if I speak not as plainly as you desire," continued the domestic with imploring earnestness; "he told me that he was a sort of cousin of yours, that he came all the way from Lincoln to find you out, and that he brings good news with him, and this is all I know of the matter as I hope for salvation."

"You lie, you infernal traitor, you lie like your master the devil; he told you no such cock-and-a-bull story," retorted his master, in a furious whisper, forgetting in an instant all the sanctimonious conventionalities of his sect, while he advanced his clenched fist within an inch of the affrighted servant's face; "it's a lie—all a lie—a villanous lie from beginning to end. He gave you money—money—or promised it—promised money for your treason—bribed, perfidious spy! did he, miscreant, did he, or not? Answer I say."

With an imprecation too awful here to be expressed, and an earnestness so palpably sincere as to leave no possible doubt of his veracity, the servant denied the charge.

"Then you are a greater idiot than I took you for, that's all," replied Tisdal through his set teeth, and with a savage scowl of the blackest rage. "A blessed driveller to leave in charge of one's house and substance!"

The whole of this conference was rendered the more singular, and perhaps not the less horrible, that it was conducted in whispers.

He turned abruptly, and walked a few steps toward the house; and then, with a gesture of despair, he strode back again to the amazed and awe-stricken domestic.

"Idiot—idiot—accursed, execrable idiot—you have ruined—destroyed your master!" ejaculated he, frantically; and at the same moment, he struck the unsuspecting man with all the force of fury, with his doubled fist, in the face. The servant staggered backward, stunned and bloody, and fell heavily upon the rough pavement under the wall. Unheeding his fall, Tisdal again turned toward the house, and again unable to summon resolution for the dreaded meeting, paused. He approached the window, looked in once more; then drew back, adjusted his disordered dress, called all his firmness to his aid, and, with a steady pace and resolute mien, entered the door of his house, and walking straight into the kitchen, confronted the sinister-looking personage, who sate, very much at his ease, beneath the comfortable canopy of the great kitchen chimney.

Cosey, warm, and cheery was the kitchen of the grange of Drumgunniol; the crisp turf and unctuous bogwood glowed, blazed, and sparkled in the mighty hearth, flooding the chamber even to its remotest nooks and most forgotten recesses with a genial warmth, and pouring abroad a ruddy light, that danced pleasantly along the smoke-dried rafters, and blazed and flashed in the rows of burnished pewter, which furnished the cumbrous old cupboard at the further end. Good cheer enough, for a year and more depended in inviting festoonery from the ceiling alone—golden bunches of onions, whole bushes of dried pot-herbs, smoked beef, hams, and flitches, and dried salmon, threw their flickering shadows far along the broad ceiling; the irregular dark walls glittered redly with crowded utensils, and loomed with high-piled shelves; a comfortable old clock ticked vigilantly in a recess near the window, and a matchlock and a short musket, together with several fishing-rods of sundry lengths, added to the homely decorations of the mantel-piece; and several cloaks and other pieces of drapery, together with sundry old hats and a saddle, depended from certain pegs in the side boarding of a cumbrous stair, which communicated with the loft above; the cat sat purring in the inmost corner of the hearth, and the dog dozed lazily, stretched at his full length before its glow. Such was the hospitable chamber which smiled a ruddy welcome upon the master of Drumgunniol, as he passed the threshold of his home, and shut his door with a lusty swing in the face of the chill night air.

Deadly and stern, however, was the contrast between this snug scene of homely abundance and the sinister and evil looks of the two personages who formed its only occupants. Tisdal fixed upon the stranger a look of gloomy menace, which his visitant returned with a tranquil grin, half of sarcasm, half of defiance; and thus, for nearly a minute, the two old acquaintances regarded each other without interchanging a single syllable.

The kitchen clock in the grange of Drumgunniol might have ticked some two or three dozen times ere Tisdal spoke.

The disreputable looking stranger sate quietly by the fire, leering slyly from the corner of his eye upon his agitated host, while a slight smile added a still more unpleasant meaning to his pale and sinister face.

At length Tisdal broke the silence.

"How came you, sir," said he, sternly, "to establish yourself as a guest in my house, uninvited and undesired by me?"

"Pooh, pooh, brother Snap, never mind mouthing with me; look like yourself, bold Captain Gordon, *alias* Burnt-brandy-for-two, or if you like the new name better, Saint Jeremiah Tisdal," retorted the stranger glibly. "Come, I say—come, man, never stand striving to look like one of the postles in a church window there, for it won't go down with me. Little Dick Slash is the same off-hand fellow that he ever was, though not quite such a *beau;* and I'm shot, if you'll come the saint over him. Ha, ha!—egad your high crown and black toggery is enough to tickle one into absolute convulsions."

"I am indeed a changed man," replied Tisdal, slowly and sternly, as soon as the harsh cachinnation with which his old acquaintance wound up, had quite subsided; "and it were well for you, Richard Deverel, if you were so, too."

"Why, that depends very much on the sort of change a man might make," answered Deverel, briskly. "For instance, a new hat, a suit of green and silver, a well-lined purse, and an active nag, were a change of affairs, I grant you, highly desirable just now. But, odds boddikins! such a change as yours! Why, if you had turned monk, or astrologer, or doctor, or any thing else, with a relish of the old dead knowledge, good living and burnt-brandy-for-two sort of style about it—odds! if you had done this, and taken a town lodging, where, as thou knowest, brother Jeremiah, there is no lack of monied *flats*, comely wenches, bully boys, sack, brandy, and so following, why, man, I could have understood and admired thee; but a puritan at the back of a bog, in the heart of a wilderness—gibbet me! if I can comprehend *that*."

"The place has been mine for nigh eleven years," replied Tisdal, doggedly. "I have lived here for that term an altered man, eschewing evil, and seeking the Lord. I affect no company save my own, and have desired no habitation save this house, ever since it has come to me."

"Come to you!" echoed the visitor, with a smile worthy of Mephistophiles himself. "I was by, Captain Gordon, I believe, when it *came* to you, as you say."

Tisdal drew his brows together in a deep, black scowl, like a man stung with a sudden pang of bodily anguish, and uttered from the depths of his wrung heart, a groan of the fiercest torture; while Deveril carelessly filled the bowl of his pipe, and lighted the tobacco at the candle.

"Come, old Bowshanks—brave brother Snap—valiant captain," exclaimed the visitor, as soon as he had got his tobacco-pipe in full play, "this is, after all, but a scurvy welcome. Let's have some supper, and a glass of your old favourite. You forget, my boy, how long it is since we two have met."

"Look ye, Richard Deveril," said Tisdal, with startling abruptness, and eyeing his visitor with a deadly scowl, while he disclosed a long-barrelled pistol gleaming in his hand, "what's to prevent my dealing with you on the spot, as—as—a *robber?*"

"And what's to prevent my dealing with *you*, in like manner, as a *murderer?*" retorted Deveril, coolly; while, without even disarranging his negligent attitude, he as instantaneously levelled a pistol at the body of his host. "One, two, three—move but a finger, and I whip you through—heart, liver, lights, pluck, and all."

Tisdal stood unmoved before the muzzle of the villain's pistol, as if his own personal risk were a matter wholly unrecognised in the stern debate which at that moment occupied his mind.

"Put up your barking-iron, and no more noise," said Deveril, with sarcastic coolness. "We know one another; and two can play at that game. Odd rat it, man, and did you fancy that little Dick Slash would pay his old friend, Captain Bowshanks, a visit at this time of night, and in his country-house, too, without the lead towels about him. Tut, man, I'm not a fool."

"You're the same cool villain you ever were," said Tisdal.

"I' faith, Master Snap, and so are you," rejoined Deveril. "Bull-dog every inch· both of us: so better not to quarrel—eh?"

"What seek you here, and with me?" urged Tisdal, gloomily.

"Look at my clothes. Pooh, pooh, you know well enough what I want," retorted Deveril. "*Help*, that's all."

"Just so; you come here to extort money," continued Tisdal.

"And find you prepared to give it," said the stranger. "Why, see you, Master Tisdal, I have not a shilling—scarce a rag. I swallowed my last crust to-day, and have nothing left on the face of the earth but these my old pair of barkers. Now, turn from me to *you*. What's your case? The devil, or what you will, has prospered you, fed your belly, clothed your back. Your steeple hat throws off the weather; that black blanket about your shoulders keeps you warm; your shoes are sound, your doublet whole; you are blessed with a house, a kitchen, coin, and what not;—in short, you are a comfortable, greasy, well-fed, rich old dog; while I—not one bit a worse man than yourself—I am all but begging my way up to Dublin. Come, come, look at the matter fairly, and say ought you to grudge a lift to an old comrade. I don't want much; you'll find me reasonable. Put up your pistols; and it you don't like my offer, it's time enough to talk big, and tap claret afterwards."

Tisdal paused for a moment moodily, and then thrust the weapon back again into his belt.

Deveril's pale face, for the first time, exhibited some slight evidences of inward agitation. He drew a long breath, and rising from his seat, stood with his back to the fire, watching with a piercing eye, in whose contracted pupil there gleamed something at once of craft, ferocity, and extreme suspicion, the movements of his host, who in dogged silence, and with a sombre scowl, took a turn or two up and down the well-stored kitchen, in the ruddy and uncertain firelight, and among the manifold creature comforts which seemed but to mock the horrors of his misery, with the glad salutation, "eat, drink, and be merry."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MONEY BAGS.

The two tenants of the kitchen of the grange of Drumgunniol remained silent for a time: Tisdal was the first to speak—

"Deveril," said he, in an altered tone, "you know not what a hazard you have run. Had I shot you dead, you would have had no more than your deserts; but, thanks be to the Lord, I have spared you, and taken no more blood upon these hands of mine. I rebuked the spirit that prompted to the act; and I swear to thee, by the living God, I will not seek to harm thee, except it be in self-defence."

"And I," said the guest, with a courteous flourish, as he re-placed his pistol, in turn, within his vest—"and I swear by the honour of a gentleman, that I will not seek to hurt thee, except for a like purpose; so the treaty is concluded and agreed on both sides. Let us then proceed to supper; for, as I have told you, my dinner has been something of the lightest; and ale and tobacco, though good enough in their way, are scarce equal, in the matter of nourishment, to a grilled pullet and a rasher of bacon; and that you'll admit, noble captain."

"Prithee, forbear to call me by nicknames," said Tisdal, vehemently. "You want food, raiment, and perchance a little money. Well, these you shall have; but while you stay under my roof, all I demand is this, that before others you make no allusion to what is past, to—in short, to my former courses. You comprehend me; and so——"

At this moment, the bony, lank, hard visage of Praise-God Bligh, bruised and frightened, appeared at the door; and Tisdal conveyed the conclusion of his caution by pressing his finger to his lip—a gesture which Deveril answered by a quiet wink. The master of Drumgunniol then proceeded to issue his orders for supper; and old Alley, the wrinkled and rheumatic maid-of-all-work, being roused from her slumbers in the loft, descended the creaking stair in loose attire, and with many a muttered curse, united her labours with those of the lean and lank-haired servitor; and thus, ere long, a smoking meal of savoury food reeked invitingly upon the board. The meal proceeded in sullen silence, until the two domestics had withdrawn for the night to their respective cribs.

"Come, come, old Snap," said the stranger, in reply to an interrogatory from Tisdal—"pleasure to-night, business to morrow. Rat me, if I hurry myself to please you—to-morrow morning, I say, I shall tell you my terms; to-night I shall consider them with the aid of your flask, and a whiff of tobacco."

"If you desire a bed, you will find a clean and warm one in yonder closet," said Tisdal.

"Why, captain," replied he, "to tell the truth, it's quite a novelty to me to meet with such brandy as I've got here, so I have made up my mind to pass the night in my chair—just in our own old style—with the stone jar before me, and a good pipe of tobacco between my finger and thumb; and all the more particularly as I see no harm in keeping wide awake—do you take me—under my very peculiar circumstances; so, with many thanks for your polite attention, I'll just stay as I am."

"Do as you list," replied Tisdal, wholly disregarding the sneer with which this intimation was conveyed; "there is turf and wood enough in the creel behind you to keep the fire blazing till morning."

Having thus spoken, the master of Drumgunniol withdrew, and with a heavy tread, and a still heavier heart, mounted the steep and narrow stair which led to his bed-chamber, and bolting and locking the door upon the inside, threw himself upon his knees, and poured forth in the agony of his soul a torrent of passionate prayer, interrupted with groans and sighs which seemed to burst from the very depths of his heart. Deveril appeared meanwhile resolved to make his solitary vigil as comfortable as the means and appliances within his reach would allow. With his thick-soled shoe he thrust the embers on the hearth together, and heaped over them fragments of dried bog-wood enough to make a bonfire; and while the genial blaze flickered and mounted with many a bursting crackle and shower of ruddy sparks, he drew his chair still nearer, and leaning his elbow on the table, and his head upon his hand, he fixed his eyes upon the shifting embers in profound and exciting meditation, while with vigorous exhalation he puffed forth dense and cloudy volumes of the aromatic vapour of his favourite weed. Half an hour passed, and he laid the exhausted pipe upon the table, slowly drained a long-stemmed glass of brandy, relapsed into deep and engrossing meditation, and arose from it at length with a laugh low and stifled, but withal so villainous in its tone and expression, that it might well have chilled the heart of any mortal listener.

"*Ex pede Herculem*," muttered he, as he stepped lightly to the cupboard, on which, in ruddy shining rows, glittered the burnished utensils of the comfortable household—"*Ex pede Herculem*, as we used to say at school, let us judge the saloon by the contents of the kitchen, and by the result see what the old boy *can* do; for after all that is the point. Pish!—pooh!—tut!" he ejaculated, as he impatiently but noiselessly turned over, one after another, the plates, dishes, cups, and flagons which stood before him in comely rows—"all pewter, pewter and brass. No clue here: nothing to show whether the old gallows-tassel has silver and gold in his plate-chest—if, indeed, he has one at all. So, igad, the only way is to take that for granted, and bleed him freely. I'm safe enough in saying he has both money and plate. Pshaw!—to be sure he has. What else does he lock up his bed-room for, and carry the key with him wherever he goes? What else does he keep that lank, canting rascal for, that the devil himself could not pump one word of information out of—either the veriest simpleton, or the deepest knave in this land of saints."

Deveril filled his pipe anew, and again seated himself in front of the blazing fire.

From his abstraction, however, he was soon aroused. His quick ear caught a sound from without, and as it seemed to him, proceeding from some cause in operation close under the very walls of the old house. The guilty and the vile are ever suspicious, and the stranger started from his seat, and gliding noiselessly across the chamber, he stepped lightly into the closet which Tisdal had indicated, and from its dark window, himself unseen, observed, to his no small astonishment, the form of Praise-God Bligh, whom he believed to be at that moment in his garret and fast asleep, gliding stealthily by, and wide awake. For a single second he beheld him, and in another he was gone.

"Treachery!" muttered Deveril; "treason in the wind"—and he went softly to the outer door; it was, however, bolted and locked upon the inside.

Tisdal meanwhile, as we have said, had locked himself into his chamber under the high roof of the mansion, and there, in the anguish of his heart, was pouring forth his bitter and impetuous supplications—fierce, fervent, and incoherent—praying for his own deliverance and pardon: and, in the same breath, invoking curses and destruction upon the head of his persecutor—upbraiding heaven with having deserted him in his need—and finally praying with sobs, and groans, and wringing of hands, that the poor, miserable, and insufficient store of household stuff, and silver and gold with which his weak endeavours had been blessed, might escape the hands of the spoiler, and the wiles of the crafty. Then rising he unlocked an old oak press, and from its darkest and deepest corner drew out a leathern bag full of gold pieces, the counting of which was one of his daily exercises, fulfilled as regularly as his devotions. He felt this bag with the fond pressure of both his hands—he cowered over it with looks of love and anguish which would have been a perfect feast to a cynic—he untied the firmly twisted thongs which secured the opening, took out one by one the broad gold pieces—looked at them with the yearning gaze of love and despair—replaced them, and again bound the neck of the huge leathern purse, with as much jealousy as if the admission of even a particle of air might have dissolved the enchanting vision which from time to time its interior disclosed.

"And must I—must I share it with him. The little store I have with so much self-denial hoarded—must its better half be squandered by this wretch, in pot-house revellings, and still viler profligacy. If I were what once I was, I would have blown fifty souls into eternity first. But no, no!—no more blood!—no more blood!"

After a little pause, he added, in a tone of fierce agitation—

"Thank God, the girl—little Phebe—is out of the way to-night—thank God, at least, for that—thank God for that."

He took a few hasty turns up and down the room—stopped short, while gradually a grim smile, first of doubtful significance, but which rapidly brightened into one of sinister but unequivocal triumph, lighted up his dark and ill-favoured countenance; with exulting vehemence he smote his hand upon his forehead, stamped fiercely upon the floor, and cried—.

"I have it, God be thanked, I have it."

He counted out ten of the broad gold pieces which furnished the leathern bag, folded them, and placed them in the same press; then from another bag of the same kind, he took some score crowns and as many shillings, and did likewise with them. He next secured the two leathern purses with tenfold precaution, and dropping them, one at each side, into the low pockets of his black thread-bare coat, he softly turned the key in his door, opened it noiselessly, and with the velvet tread of an old tiger, stole forth upon the lobby. He paused at the stair-head, stooped over the bannister, and with his open hand, throwing back the straggling grizzled locks which impeded his hearing, and with mouth agape, and scarcely daring to breathe, he listened for any stir which might prove his visitant in motion; for well he knew the accomplishments of him with whom he had to deal—a mongrel monster, combining the ferocity of the wolf and the craft of the fox—vigilant, suspicious, murderous, and prompt.

He was satisfied with the result of his observation, and without however abating the extreme caution with which his movements were conducted, he glided across the lobby to the little chamber where Praise-God Bligh was slumbering in happy unconsciousness, after the fatigues and agitations of the day. Softly and cautiously did Tisdal raise the latch, and stealthily did he move into the apartment until he stood by the pallet of his unconscious dependant, when stooping over his recumbent form, with one hand he grasped and shook the shoulder of the slumberer, while with the other he no less rudely compressed his mouth; and, as his eyes opened upon the dark form which, like some black unsightly vision of the night, stooped over him, Tisdal said, in harsh emphatic whispers—

"It is I—I, Jeremiah Tisdal, your master; be not afraid; speak not one word, for your life; fear nothing—but up, and do thy clothes on."

The man, thus aroused, with as little noise as even Tisdal could have wished, got down from his bed, and in silent haste began to huddle on his clothes, so that in a few minutes he stood before the puritan sufficiently attired for the service upon which he was thus abruptly summoned.

"Bligh," said his master, returning from the door, at which, with jealous caution he had again been listening, and closing it carefully behind him; "your thriftless folly has placed me and my household in sore jeopardy; that fellow who now sits and keeps watch in the kitchen, is a *murderer* and a *robber:* speak not, sirrah, but listen: what's past cannot be mended. You shall descend from this window with the speed of light—bear these bags to Glindarragh, and—but woe's me! no—that will not do—they are all at rest ere this—and to return with the money were ruin—utter ruin. Yet they must not remain in the house even for an hour," he continued, distractedly; "the villain may have begun his search already; anything but that—anything but that; so get you forth, and dig quickly and quietly a small hole, some three feet deep, under the crab tree in the paddock; lay in the bottom of it these two bags, which I will drop down when you are safe on the ground; throw the soil carefully back again, so that so much as a single ounce weight of it shall not remain about—tread it home, and lay the sod neatly on top, so that none can suspect it has been disturbed; dost thou comprehend? So now forth, and down with thee."

In stern contempt of the young man's expostulations and alarms, Tisdal compelled him to essay the perilous descent—the feat was performed in safety—and, with fluttering anxiety and eager eyes, Jeremiah watched the lad, as he hurried round the corner of the house to the well-secured spot to which he had directed him.

He paused, scarcely daring to breathe, until he thought sufficient time had elapsed for the execution of the momentous commission, and then Tisdal again entered his chamber, made some alterations in his dress, as though he had but just risen, and hastily attired himself, and taking his candle in his hand, he, with an ostentatious clatter proceeded to stamp and stumble down the stairs—calling, as he approached the kitchen, "Ho! Deveril!—art thou awake; rouse thee, man, I would fain have a word with thee."

He entered the kitchen, and found Deveril apparently precisely as he had left him."

"I tell thee, Deveril, I cannot rest. Thou has spoken well—I cannot slumber," said Tisdal, gloomily, setting the candle upon the table, and seating himself. "Though I have courted sleep with all my soul, it has fled from me. It will not return even for a moment; nor can I know repose until this matter is settled between us; so let it now be determined, and once for all concluded, and thus an end of it. We each understand the other; say then, at once, what wilt thou take and begone, so that I may never see thee more."

"Will you swear to play me no knave's trick," replied Deveril, fixing his piercing gaze upon his host, "and say what plate and money thou hast in thy possession?"

With an imprecation too fearful to be repeated, Tisdal named the sum which he had just deposited in his press, as all the wealth his dwelling contained, and proffered the keys of all his presses, chests, and closets, in vindication of his truth.

"Some fifty pounds. Hum! You have scarce been prudent, noble captain—too much addicted methinks to creature-comforts to be so thrifty as would become one of thy years," replied Deveril, "Fifty pounds is a pretty sum, I must admit; but then my habits, as you know, are expensive—and my secret worth something. Nevertheless I mean to be reasonable; and to put you out of pain at once, I name a hundred—an hundred pounds—not a penny less. You can easily get the other fifty among your friends and neighbours, or, in short, where you list; but have them I must—that's all."

"You're a merciless, griping villain to deal with," answered Tisdal, bitterly; "but I suppose I must e'en submit. All I can do is to try to find the money, though few will be disposed to lend it. To-morrow I will seek it; and, come what come may, on the day following, by hook or by crook, I shall make it up."

He sighed profoundly as he concluded the sentence, called up as nearly as he could the despairing look of a ruined man, and then, with a hollow groan, he turned and remounted the worn and creaking stairs, exultingly muttering between his teeth, as the distance between him and his former comrade increased—

"And if you live until that day, or escape such a singeing on to-morrow-night, as will give thee quite enough of this country and its customs, may I pay thee every shilling of the hundred pounds; if my house is to be burned, 'tis well, at least, to have such a scoundrel broiled to powder in the flames."

His mind pleasantly occupied with plans of further extortion, Deveril, upon the other hand, chuckled with unrestrained glee, and rubbed his hands together, as the departing footsteps of his gloomy host smote heavily upon his ear; and so the two companions parted for the night, each in the happy conviction that he had over-reached the other.

CHAPTER XII.

SHOWING THE HALL OF LISNAMOE AND THE HILLS OF SLIEVE-PHELIM BY NIGHT—AND NARRATING HOW NED O' THE HILLS SMOKED A PIPE OF TOBACCO AND STRUCK A BARGAIN.

On the same night, Miles Garrett was sitting in the same shabby habiliments in which we have last beheld him, buried in profound and by no means gentle thought, in the hall of his castle at Lisnamoe. At a table—equally taciturn, though by no means as thoughtful—sate, at a little distance, the very person who had, but a few hours before, so terrified the fair Grace Willoughby, and afterwards so roughly atoned for his discourtesy; he was absorbed in the engrossing demolition of a mighty mountain of beef, which he washed down with copious draughts of ale, and abundant potations of more generous liquor. It was not until this unattractive personage had concluded his repast, and twice filled and twice emptied his goblet, that the silence of the apartment was disturbed. Pushing back the oak stool on which he sate, the brawny gentleman (for he claimed a gentle lineage) arose, heaved his huge shoulders, hitched up his breeches, and drawing the cuff of his coat across his greasy mouth, he approached his entertainer with an easy swagger.

"Well, sir, that's done; and now, I may say, I'm all as one as ready for the road," ejaculated he, planting his broad fists on the table; "so, if it's pleasing to your honour, you might as well give me the bit of paper, for I'd like to be tramping at once."

"Sit down, then," said Garrett, taking pen and paper,—"sit down, and attend to me. You have deposed to having lost sundry head of cattle, and you now require a warrant from me, empowering you, in the king's name, to search for the same—is it not so?"

"To a nicety," ejaculated the fellow, with a sly grin.

"You know your powers under this warrant—eh?" inquired the magistrate.

"Och, bloody wars!—what id ail me?" answered he, impatiently.

"Then I shall place it in your hands, leaving all to your *discretion*," continued Garrett, with marked significance, while he applied himself to draft the necessary document, which—having dried it carefully at the fire, and read it through—he handed to the applicant, observing, as he did so, with emphatic deliberation—

"I have no choice in this matter, Mr. Hogan. As a justice of the peace I have no choice——but to grant your application, and, *as a* justice of the king's peace, I wish you success. You say you have an appointment for to-night elsewhere, touching this untoward business, so it were poor courtesy to press your farther stay; should you desire it, however, you can have the same bed in which you last night slept."

"Well, Miles Garrett, a *bochal*," cried the ruffian, exultingly, as he pinned the paper in his waistcoat pocket, "never believe me if you don't hear of quare news before a week is past and gone—and if I don't do all you want, and may be a bit to the back of it—"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Garrett, with stern abruptness, and staring full in the fellow's face, until the familiar gaze of the ruffian sank for a moment abashed and subdued under the steadier and more commanding eye of the superior villain. "Execute that warrant as seems most consistent with the king's service and your own interest; and again, sir, I wish you may succeed in recovering your cattle."

"Well, well," said the other, "take your own way—it's all one—we both of us know what we want, and that is every thing; and so, your worship, I wish you a good night and the best of good luck, and peace and plenty; and here's towards your good health."

He had approached the wine-flask, as he spoke, and filling a bumper, with a grin of savage meaning he nodded to Miles Garrett, quaffed it down to the last drop, and then, looking in vain into the unmoved countenance of his host for a single ray of corresponding significance, he muttered—

"Well, well, well, but you're a quare boy;" and so, turning upon his heel he left the room, and was, in five minutes after, riding slowly along a broken and narrow way, which led through the heathy steeps and wilds of the savage and desolate mountains of Slieve-phelim.

Miles Garrett, meanwhile, arose, and paced the stone floor of the hall with an exulting stride.

"All goes smoothly and steadily onward," said he with an ill-favoured smile: "by this time to-morrow night, the better part of all his cattle and his other substance will be driven or waste, and thus the first act of the tragic drama will have been completed; and if he resist their entrance, demanded in virtue of the king's warrant—then, in that case, comes the second act—the second and the best—for all the rest flows smoothly on from thenceforth to the crowning scene—the tragic catastrophe—stupid, headstrong, helpless hound!"

With a pale face, dilated nostril, and a grim smile, Miles Garrett paced the floor from wall to wall. His ruminations seemed to afford him no small delight, for he slapped his forehead, exultingly, and muttered—

"It's all the brain—the brain—the brain!" He relapsed into sience for some minutes, and his countenance grew darker and darker every moment. At last he spoke again—"And as for thy daughter"—he continued, with an ugly scowl, and biting his thin lips at every pause—"as for thy daughter, if I but choose to have her, I *shall* have her, in spite of all thy frantic bluster. Bah! Hugh Willoughby, you ought to know me by this time;" and he smiled in the malignant consciousness of his own dogged and resolute sagacity and daring. "Yes, Hugh Willoughby, you shall know within a month all you have lost in madly repelling my proffered hand. Old scores of vengeance and bright hopes of profit and advancement I was willing to forego; but like an idiot you repulsed your fortune. You have had your miserable triumph. Make the most of it; for now—*now* something tells me MY triumph is at hand. Yes, Hugh Willoughby, you have made your bed, and you shall lie in it!"

While Miles Garrett thus chewed the cud of sweet and bitter fancy—as with downward, ominous glance, and heavy stride, he stalked backward and forward through his gloomy hall—his recent guest and companion was under the hazy moonlight, pursuing his lonely and uneven road. This track, little better than a broken pathway, wound along the elevated surface of the broad range of hills, deep among whose vast and heathy undulations the horseman was soon tracing his solitary and melancholy progress. The sense of loneliness is nowhere so awful as among the gigantic and monotonous solitudes of mountain scenery, especially when the exaggerating and uncertain radiance of the moon shrouds the vast undulations of the bleak and mighty hill-sides, and invests their dusky outlines with undefined immensity of distance and magnitude. There the solitary traveller—lifted high above the sounds and sights of human habitation, with savage and gigantic scenery looming in deserted sublimity above and around him—feels, amid the vastness and the utter solitude of nature, awe-struck with a fearful sense of his own nothingness. An intruder, as it were, among elements and influences, stupendous, desolate, and unsocial, he loses all sense of companionship with the things around him, and a feeling of isolation and of undefined danger steals solemnly and fearfully upon him.

The horseman whom we are bound to follow, now found himself in the lap of a broad misty hollow, around which, as he proceeded, seemed to gather and thicken the dark and swelling summits of the hills—like monstrous forms closing him in to intercept his escape, and sailing slowly onward to overwhelm him in their awful confluence. Here and there the inequalities of the heathy flat, over which his course lay, were marked by huge strata of naked rock, lifted above the dark brown surface in vast riven masses, and strewn along the soil in gray shimmering lines, like the fragments and foundations of some Titanic fortification; and the grandeur and desolation of the scene were heightened by the rush and moan of the upper currents of the air, as they swept among the hill tops, and through the rocky glens, and solitary ravines.

The cavalier had heard of "*phookas*" and other malignant sprites, who, in desert places, encounter, scare, and even smite with decrepitude or madness the benighted traveller. He was familiar, too, with a thousand wild stories of the freaks, the delusions, and the malice of "the good people." He had heard how farmers, returning alone from distant fairs or travelling pedlars pursuing their benighted way, had been met and accosted on these lonely hills by ugly dwarfs, or intercepted by calves or dogs of unearthly kind, and other strange beings, who had terrified or abused them, so that, by the morning light, they had lost either their wits or their lives. All these tales of preternatural terror floated in gloomy succession through his mind, as he rode slowly onward through the vast and misty solitudes of the mountain-tracts. Often, as he pursued his way, he drew bridle and paused, fancying that he had heard a woman's shriek, and uncertain whether the shrill and distant sound might not have been the cry of some wild bird, scared by the night-owl from its rest; and listening on with a horrible misgiving, lest the sound should prove some phantom-wail, and be succeeded by some wilder spectral freak of unequivocal and insupportable terror; again he would turn and gaze behind him, as the hushed breeze hovered like close whispers in his ear, and scowling breathless, with blanched cheeks and parted lips. into the bleak void, subduing the half-muttered curse which instinctively rose to his lips, and mumbling a word or two of a forgotten prayer; and then, with an effort to re-assure himself, giving his hat a new set, squaring his shoulders, planting his arm a-kimbo, and whistling a snatch of some favourite tune, he would once more resume his way, again to interrupt it as before.

It was, therefore, with a sense of relief which he would scarcely have confessed even to himself, that at last, after more than an hour's lonely progress, he found himself within a mile of the spot at which he knew he should find human companionship. Inwardly congratulating himself upon his proximity to his journey's present termination, he pressed onward at a brisker pace—still, however, very far from being altogether freed from those visitings of awe and doubt which he had, during his long and lonely night-ride, in vain endeavoured entirely to suppress. While he thus spurred onward, now traversing the soft elastic peat with noiseless tread, and now clanging over the naked rock, a strange and dwarfish figure, which fancy might well have assigned to one of the malignant fairly brood, on a sudden started—he knew not how—as it seemed from the very soil beneath his horse's hoofs. A thrill of superstitious terror for a moment unnerved him, and it was not until he had gazed for some seconds upon the wild and startling apparition, that he recognised the elf-looks and smoke-dried visage of the ill-favoured boy, whose unexpected appearance had that day so affrighted Sir Hugh's fair daughter at Glindarragh bridge.

"God bless us!" said the horseman, recovering from an indistinct attempt to cross himself; "and so it's only you, you devil's whelp."

And indulging the irritation which often follows causeless alarm, the burly horseman dealt the urchin a sharp blow of his switch across the head, which made him howl and caper in so unearthly and uncouth a fashion, that one unacquainted with his eccentricities of mien might well have felt his supernatural doubts confirmed, rather than allayed by the wild and grotesque exhibition.

"Never mind it, Shaeen dhas, never mind it, purty boy," said the man, as the urchin gradually abated his strange demonstrations. "I did not know you, asthora—never mind it; but tell me, like an honest gossoon, is he down in the glin?"

"He is—what id ail him," said the boy—"himself an' two or three more, *Leum a rinka* and Shaun Laudher, an' a boy iv the Kellys, an' a quare little gossoon like myself, and the old Shan-a-van, an' that's all that's in it."

The horseman spurred his steed into a clattering canter, the boy running lightly and easily by his side; and thus they continued in silence to advance, until the track which they pursued swept into the course of a narrow glen, at first presenting a declivity so slight as to be scarcely distinguishable from the heathy level of the higher region, but gradually becoming more and more defined, until at last it deepened into a dark and craggy pass, precipitous and rocky, clothed with furze and heath, and traversed at the bottom by a stream, now dwindled to an attenuated thread, and whose gravelly bed supplied the broken and precarious roadway over which they dashed and scrambled. An abrupt turn of this defile brought them on a sudden to the object of their search.

From the door of a wretched hovel perched half-way up the steep and narrow pass, there streamed a strong red light, which flooded the rocky fragments and tufted furze, crowded closely about it, with warm and cheery crimson; and as it lay at the shadowy side of the deep ravine, the dusky light relieved the few objects on which it fell in fiery distinctness, and rendered the surrounding darkness but the denser and blacker by the contrast. Placing his horse's bridle in the hand of the uncouth and savage urchin who attended him, Hogan ascended the steep path which led to the cabin-door, and in a few moments he stood beneath the roof-tree of the hovel.

In the strong red light of the fire sat, or rather reclined, three men in coarse frieze, listlessly chatting in the strong gutturals of their native tongue; and thus disposed around the hearth in such attitudes as suited each, they occupied the hard earthen floor beneath the chimney, and warmed themselves the while. An old, smoke-dried, puckered hag cowered at the back of the hearth, showing through the filmy turf smoke scarcely more substantial than the pale blue and yellow flames which flickered above the red embers. Pacing the uneven earthen floor at the front of this rude and comfortless chamber, and from time to time glancing sharply through the open door as he arrested his measured pace, was a personage, of whose appearance we must say a word or two. He was rather above than below the middle size, his structure compact, well-knit, and wiry; and as he measured the floor with a firm and elastic tread, and turned his quick and fiery glance from object to object, there was a restless excitability and energy in his whole air and mien, as well as a piercing shrewdness, a promptitude and decision in his marked and swarthy countenance, which stamped him at once as a man of action and of daring. His dress, though considerably worn and weather-beaten, was alike in fabric and fashion that of a man who pretended to the rank of a gentleman. His own coal-black hair escaped from under the broad leaf of his hat, and added to the effect of his dark and sharply-marked features, which alike from the intense brightness and activity of his dark eye, and from the peculiar conformation of the strongly developed under jaw, bore a character of sternness and even of cruelty which impressed those who looked upon him with feelings bordering upon fear, aversion, and distrust. As he strode backward and forward, he seemed wrapped in exciting meditation; one hand was buried in his bosom, the other held the slender stem of a tobacco-pipe, from which he drew the smoke, which, in dense and rapid volumes, he puffed into the eddying air. With downward aspect and knitted brow, and flashing glance, he thus traversed the breadth of the dreary hovel to and again, as Hogan reached the door.

A curt but cordial greeting passed between these two personages thus brought together, and a close and earnest conference followed, partly carried on in English, and partly in the "mother tongue." Through this it is not necessary to follow them; it is enough for our purpose to state its concluding words—

"You'll be able to gother the boys in time?" asked Hogan, doubtfully.

"With one whistle I'd bring them round me from Keeper to Monaster-owena, and from Doon to Killaloe," rejoined he, scornfully.

"And you'll not fail me?" continued Hogan.

"When did O Moel Ryan fail of his promise?" returned "Ned o' the Hills"—for he was the speaker—with tranquil disdain.

"Hand and word," cried the brawny visitor, as with emphatic energy he smote his broad hand upon the extended palm of his companion—"hand and word, and the bargain's clenched."

At a word from Ryan, one of the followers at the hearth sprung to his feet, and filling out two drams of brandy, carried them to the door where the two principal persons stood.

"I drink to you, Mr. Hogan," said Ryan.

"And here's towards your good health," replied Hogan, in a voice of thunder, "an' success to us both, an' smashing to smithers be the luck of our inemies."

With these words he dashed off the liquor, and, with a wild hurra, he flung the glass high into the dewy night-air, whence descending, it burst into jingling shivers in the craggy depths of the bleak glen—a type of the savage malediction to which he had just pledged its contents.

"To-morrow night, and half an hour before the moon goes down," said our new acquaintance, shaking back his long dark locks, as a lion might his mane, when he scents the prey afar off, "in the wood of Glindarragh, and under the *Carrig-na-Phoka*—and so, God send you safe home."

Thus they parted, Hogan to pursue, in his long and solitary night-ride, the purpose which occupied his mind; and his confederate to complete, in the hurried interval, the vast and deadly arrangements of their desperate enterprise.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, in her chamber in the old castle of Glindarragh—books, music, and old-fashioned tapestry work all neglected—sits, in her ponderous high-backed chair, her soft eyes resting in deep reverie upon the changing embers of the hearth, the sweet Grace Willoughby, pensive, pale and mournful—she who before that night scarce ever knew what one grave thought or one transient cloud of sorrow might be. What thoughts are now chasing one another through the clear stillness of her mind? The agitating dangers of the evening have ceased to quicken her pulse and flush her cheek; the flutterings of her proud and timid heart are quiet now, and yet she sits absorbed in the deep enchantment of her reverie. Her beautiful face, late so radiant and dimpling with the pleasant smiles of arch and girlish merriment, is now touched for the first time with the loftier character of pride and melancholy—yet both combined so softly, and in so lovely a look, that nothing but the nobleness of pride and the gentle sweetness of sorrow reign in its pure and mournful tranquillity. As she leans her graceful head upon her small white hand, on which falls thickly the golden shower of her rich hair, her memory is busy with the words, the looks, the gestures, aye, with the very plumes and spurs and gold lace of the handsome champion who had rescued her that day. She hears him as he spoke—every accent of his rich manly voice is sounding in her ear; he stands before her, in all his proud and martial beauty, as she that day beheld him—she sees again his looks of chivalric, respectful tenderness, as he led her toward her home; and then, again, oh! sudden, painful change, she beholds the stern and proud aspect, the averted look, with which her transformed deliverer took his abrupt departure. Innocent girl! as thus she muses, she persuades her willing heart that she but yields to the promptings of her simple curiosity; yet if she will but look into that heart, she will find a deeper interest there. What makes it happiness to thee to recall his lighest word, or look, or gesture; and when his sudden parting rises in thy memory, why that pang of wounded pride, and whence that rising sigh? Oh! girl, bethink thee ere it be too late; he is thy father's foe—the devoted enemy of all thy house; beware, sweet Grace, beware; love not where thou canst not be loved again; guard well the portals of thy warm and gentle heart; oh, dwell not on his words and looks so fondly; but banish that image from thy mind with fear and horror, as a snare of Hell.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUNSET AND MOONLIGHT ON THE TOWERS OF GLINDARRAGH.

THOUGH the meditated attempt on the castle of Glindarragh was vaguely known among the surrounding peasantry, and though it supplied the material of gossiping discussion at every forge and hedge shebeen-shop for miles around, yet, neither to Sir Hugh nor to one individual of his household, was one hint of danger spoken—absolute mystery sealed the lips of every peasant; and had it not been for the warning of which we have already spoken, the castle of Glindarragh might easily have been surprised, and all within it lain at the mercy of a wild banditti.

The sun was now hastening downward among the western hills, and, as it seemed, with a fiery and vengeful light glared murkily upon the old towers of Glindarragh. A low wind moaned and whispered through the chimneys and battlements of the doomed building and the neighbouring wood, with a wild ominous sound, in fitful gusts, which muttered and swelled like the laughter of fiendish revelry, and died away in long wailing moans. On the castle walls, from time to time, might be seen anxious groups scanning the distance with stern and gloomy suspense. The gates were fast closed and barred, and the stout old building, in its bold and sombre isolation, might well have suggested the image of some gallant storm-beaten ship, with rigging taut and all hands alert, awaiting an approaching hurricane.

Occasional snatches of songs floated, as if in defiance, from the gray summits of the old towers, and mingled strangely with the lowing of cattle which arose from within the walls—and again all was lost in the bleak howl of the rising gust. Every thing gave note of preparation—the loop-holes in the river tower flanking the great gate, which had been walled up for years, were now again opened for the play of musketry; and from the summit of the Banshee's tower, which, at the other extremity, in like manner flanked the entrance, peered downward the muzzle of an ancient and honey-combed demi-culverin, loaded with musket bullets half way to the mouth. The castle-yard, too, presented an unwonted spectacle; for all the best of Sir Hugh's cattle had been driven from the neighbouring pastures, and cows and fat oxen and sheep, stood in patient groups, penned closely within the precincts of a rough paling, which left but one free avenue down the centre of the yard, and a clear though narrow passage down the sides. Thus the crowded cattle stood in hundreds closely pent within the dark inclosure of the castle walls, and all the air of stir and bustle within the fortress was enhanced by the arrival, from various quarters, in prompt response to Sir Hugh's summons, of motley reinforcements, numbering in all full seventy men; some of gentle birth, accompanied by their servants; others, sturdy yeomen, with their sons or brethren; and all with due supply of muskets, matchlocks, birding pieces, or other serviceable fire-arms, and proportionate and proper ammunition therewith; for Tyrconnell's proclamation for the disarming of the yeomanry and gentry had been but partial and imperfect in its effect, and, unless where there existed a pressing necessity, or what was so considered by King James's government, for enforcing its requisitions, had remained practically inoperative; except, indeed, that the new construction of the law exposed the man who ventured to dispute it to the risk of a state prosecution, if by any overt act he evinced his disobedience to the Castle manifesto, and thus was added not a little to the embarrassments and the perils of men, whose properties and lives the government had not at all times the power, even if it had the desire, to protect, and who were, therefore, in most cases reduced to rely for safety, under Providence, solely upon their own energies and resources.

It was now late enough, in all conscience, for Jeremiah Tisdal, th cool and cautious Puritan, to have sought the security of Glindarragh Castle, and along with his ungainly servitor—Praise-God Bligh—to have contributed to the numbers of the little garrison its due contingent from the townland of Drumgunniol; yet Jeremiah Tisdal had not arrived, and Sir Hugh was perplexed to divine the reason of his absence, and often missed his sagacious counsel, as with the aid of the more experienced of his friends he apportioned the defence of the old fortress among its garrison, and assigned to each his post and office when the emergency of actual conflict should have arisen.

The level beams of this stormy sunset, and the lengthening shadows had, however, warned Tisdal that the time had indeed arrived when he could no longer with safety protract his stay within the comparatively unprotected mansion of Drumgunniol. With Praise-God Bligh, therefore, by his side, and a matchlock of marvellous length gleaming upon his shoulder, and a huge horn of gunpowder and a leathern bag of bullets dangling by his belt beneath the cloak, the Puritan might have been seen issuing from the wicket-door of the yard, and tracing with his wonted gait, and with a countenance unusually black and troubled, the pathway which conducted from his house to Glindarragh bridge—the lank and sad-coloured form of the lad who accompanied him, with a short musket slung at his lean back, followed closely and fearfully at his heels; and never did sunset-ray light upon a gloomier or more forbidding pair. In total silence they thus traversed the lonely path together, and without encountering a human form, excepting one or two peasant loungers, whom they passed without one word or gesture of greeting, in sullen silence and with a dark interchange of looks of mutual menace and hatred, they both at length found themselves upon the little bushy eminence which commanded a view of the bridge and castle of Glindarragh. Here the long pent-up feelings of the master of Drumgunniol at last found vent. He stopped short and looked back with an aspect of the extremest distress towards the spot where the gray chimneys of Drumgunniol peered above the bushes which clothed the brow of the intervening slopes.

"It is a sore extremity and hard to bear," he muttered, clutching the stock of his matchlock with the energy of rage.

The servant responded by one of those peculiar groans, which rise mournfully from the depths of the stomach, and finding no vent at the compressed and drawn-down lips, escape, at last, with a dismal twang from the nose. With this meek and mournful response, he folded his lean hands, and turned up his eyes.

"Bligh," said his master, clutching him decisively by the arm, "thou art a fleet runner, even as Ashael, who followed after the chariot of Abner; unsling thy firelock, and back to the house—it will be dark ere thou hast reached it, and the serpent eyes of that incarnate devil cannot penetrate the dark; try once more what has baffled us—(woe is me!) all the day long—without his seeing thee, get me the money bags and thou shalt have—I will give thee—I will not tell thee what, at present—but speed thee, and I will wait for thee where I stand; at all events, be sure that you return with speed—our lives may rest on it—away!"

Bligh knew too well the absolute and cruel temper of him with whom he had to deal—much as his bowels yearned to plead for a remission of the dreaded order—even for a moment to dispute his master's command, and with trembling knees, and a sinking heart, he started upon his very doubtful mission. But, ere he did so, the sun went down, and the murky twilight began to strive more and more faintly with the wan moonlight, whose cold radiance was soon to illume the wide expanded landscape.

Every thing conspired to enhance the uneasiness of the proprietor of Drumgunniol. Half-an-hour had now elapsed, and his servant had not returned—though, as his impatient master calculated, so fleet a runner as he might have easily traversed the intervening distance four times over in the time. He cursed his hard fate a thousand times—bitterly he anathematized the lagging courier, whom he would have cheerfully seen roasted to a cinder at a slow fire, in exchange for the blessed assurance that his precious gold was safe. Another half hour had nearly passed, and Tisdal eyed the dark battlements of the tower, and inwardly prayed that he might, ere ten minutes more had passed, find himself safely within their compass—resolved that, should that time elapse without bringing the return of his absent messenger, the lad, and, alas! the gold must be left to their doom.

With the nervousness of a man who knows that every moment of his stay may prove that of his own destruction, and who yet feels, that to desert the post of suspended danger which he occupies, is, in effect, to abandon that which is dearer to him almost than his very life, Tisdal paced the narrow platform which he had chosen for his watch, from bush to bush; the chill blast froze his heart, and its deep threatening and wild sounds dismayed him. With looks of jealous and ferocious scrutiny, he trod the narrow space and searched the distance, as the daring and storm-beaten captain of some surrounded smuggler, in the desperation of his circumstances, might pace his quarter-deck, and strain his eyes for the distant chance of relief or escape. The moon, however, was now the only source of light, and her silvery disk was fast approaching the verge of the horizon—to stay any longer, indeed he felt, would be but madness—one despairing curse he launched at his lagging messenger, and then was about, in sheer distraction, to cross the bridge, and claim admittance to the castle, when he saw a dark figure gliding along the pathway from Drumgunniol toward him.

"It is Bligh," thought he, while his heart bounded with exultation—but, alas! never was hope more delusive. Bligh had had his adventures, and was then far enough away.

Tisdal moved a pace or two to meet the approaching form, and, as he did so, his ear was startled with the report of a musket, sharply echoed from the direction of his own house, and, with a momentary glance, he beheld a strange blood-red light tinging the horizon with a wild and lurid glare, exactly where his mansion stood.

"As I live, it burns," said Tisdal, while his colour shifted to a livid hue, and his breath came thick; "they have fired the house. Now—now, it is all up with thee, crafty, subtle, ill-fated miscreant."

There was, however, no triumph in his face as he thus spoke—nothing but a deadly, livid horror. His eye travelled again to the path way, where he had beheld the solitary figure but a moment before, and now it seemed as though, in dense and sombre masses, the dark bushes themselves were creeping and stealing onward to meet him.

"May the Almighty guard me, it is the wild Irish!" he muttered, with a terrible revulsion, and instantaneously turned and ran, with what speed his stiff joints could command, down the rugged pathway toward the bridge.

A dense mass of human forms, however, noiselessly deployed before him upon the open road at the near bridge end—he knew not how or from whence—like a black sea, overflowing its banks, and noiselessly pouring its waters into the neighbouring flats and hollows.

"Surrounded!—oh, merciful Father, deliver me," he ejaculated, in the extremity of his despair.

And now, all around him, were seen the same dark masses, stealing, and crowding, and creeping along; and now another, and another shot was heard in the dull distance from Drumgunniol, and the fierce glare which lighted up the horizon glowed deeper and wilder. It was no longer possible to avoid detection, so, with the desperate resolution of selling his life as dearly as he could, Jeremiah Tisdal grasped his long matchlock firmly in both hands, and ran towards the bridge, upon the desperate chance of forcing his way unexpectedly between the party who occupied the river brink and the castle gate, and, this done, of keeping them at bay until he had reached the shelter of the walls. His plan, however, was hardly conceived ere it was frustrated; for, in his quick descent, he stumbled upon the rugged pathway, and striding with accelerated speed down the broken slope, he at length fell headlong, and, in doing so, discharged innocuously, with loud explosion, the whistling bullet from his matchlock, through the night air; and ere he could recover his feet, was overpowered and secured.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ASSAULT.

While this is passing without, the reader must pardon us if we transport him for one moment within the castle walls, on which from place to place are posted some score of sentinels, armed, vigilant, and anxious—their weapons glancing, and their forms showing darkly in the uncertain moonlight. He must follow us into the great hall of the castle. It is a long and broad stone-floored chamber, with a low oaken ceiling sustained by heavy beams, blackened by age and smoke; at each end yawns a capacious hearth, in which roars an eddying cloud of smoke, and sparkles, and flickering flame, as the piles of turf and crackling bogwood glow and blaze, like rival bonfires, beneath their opposing chimneys. A mighty oaken table stretches down the centre of this great chamber, so vast that in the flaming smoky torch-light one can scarcely see clearly from end to end. Huge dishes, high-piled with savoury fare, poultry and mighty joints, and pyramids of potatoes, and dishes of the now obsolete "cobladdy," send up their savoury canopy of steam, which overhangs in genial festoonery of cloud the busy guests, fully a hundred in number, who with their weapons beside them, and in strange and grotesque variety of demi-military equipment, sit upon stout oak stools upon either side, and with knives and forks raise such a din and clatter on the pewter plates, as well nigh drown the obstreporous clangour of voices raised in jest, or disputation, or excited narrative, and the uproar of laughter and good wishes, as the ringing of goblets when the guests pledge one another in cordia revelry, and altogether there swells and thunders such a volume of festive uproar, as might have stunned a miller in his tuck-mill.

At the upper end of the board, as beseems the host, sits the stou Sir Hugh, and at his right and left those of the highest consideration among his visiters. Casks of good wine, as well as of mighty ale propped along the walls, yielded to the simple appliance of the faucet and spiggot their delicious burthens, which foamed in many a silver and many a pewter tankard, cup, and flagon : and all this scene of hilarity and festive cheer was heightened and exaggerated by the exciting consciousness of approaching conflict and companionship in danger ; and in its picturesque effect mellowed and enriched by the warm and lurid glare of torches, flaming redly from their sockets in the walls over the warlike and variously attired banqueters.

"Nevertheless," continued Stepney of Annagh—a white-headed old gentleman, with full, red, stolid cheeks, small grey, good-humoured eyes, shaggy eyebrows, and almost no forehead at all, looking gravely upon Sir Hugh—"nevertheless I think it were well to sally forth, and lay about us. Trust me, there's nothing like a vigorous sally."

"We have no right to assault them till they have first attacked us," replied Sir Hugh ; "and all I seek is to defend my house against them. God forbid that I should shed one drop of blood more than our protection requires. Besides—besides," he continued with a mournful shake of the head, "I would not set my child's safety upon the precarious chances of such an enterprise."

"What if they try to burn us out of the place ?" urged the old man.

"If it be possible to burn the house," said Percy Neville, glancing upward at the torches which flared within a few feet of the ceiling, "which seems to me a problem, methinks we're like to save the gentlemen that trouble."

"I fear them not," said old Sir Hugh ; "my trust is in the Almighty. My family in time past have suffered sore distresses and dreadful extremities within this very house of Glindarragh, yet the old towers stand firm as ever, and a Willoughby is here to-night to guard them with his own right arm."

"And a Neville, too, by my faith," said the young man briskly, and with a flashing eye. Then as instantaneously relapsing into his usual careless vein, he added—"A Neville, too, as the devil would have it—wherever kicks and cuffs are plentiest, there my benignant star is sure to carry me. But meanwhile does it not strike you, cousin Willoughby, that while we are swilling and cramming here, the castle might be stormed, and the sentries all impaled, and we know nothing of the matter, until our own turn came to die upon these piles of beef and poultry ; for my part I could not hear so much as the crack of that old cannon on the—what d'ye call it tower?"

"Smuggling Dick has the culverin in charge," said Stepney, pompously.

"Then Smuggling Dick is not long for this world," rejoined Neville; "they have loaded it to the very mouth, and, never believe me, or it will burst like an egg-shell. Reserve the culverin, good cousin Hugh, I beseech you, to the last act of the tragedy, and when things are altogether desperate, and you have made up your mind to put the garrison out of pain, and blow the old castle into infinite space, then, and not till then, give Smuggling Dick the signal, spring the culverin, and so discharge us, castle and all, with eclat into the clouds."

"You're a brave lad, though somewhat hair-brained," replied Sir Hugh, gravely; "but there is reason in much that you have said, and so methinks it were well that we were stirring, and this supper ended."

As he thus spoke, a messenger from without, his long hair wisped and straggling wildly from the wind, and his face scared and pale, stood at the door, and shouted in accents that rose above the din and clatter of the feast, as with uplifted arms he gazed eagerly toward Sir Hugh—

"The Irish are coming!—the Irish—the Irish!"

A hundred voices in wild confusion caught up, and echoed the startling summons. At the instant every face darkened with the stern reality and presence of danger; wild and savage was the hubbub—the clang of weapons, as in breathless haste each guest resumed his own—the scrambling of men across the table, amid crashing dishes and rolling tankards—the tumbling of stools and barrels, and the hoarse cries of "the Irish!—the Irish!—the Rapparees—Ned o' the Hills. Let them come on, they're welcome; we're ready for them. We'll give them a bellyful—Protestant powder and ball. Hurrah!—hola!—huzza!"

Thus shouting in terrible and deadly excitement, hurtling and hustling along, and jostling one another, they poured forth into the castle yard, and each mounted to his post of vantage, with the deep, stern curiosity of brave men, who in the tempest hear on a sudden the dreadful words, "the ship is on a rock," and climb breathless to the deck to see for themselves the dangers which surround them. With feelings such as these, but toned by resolute daring and indomitable self-reliance, did the little garrison mount to the various posts assigned them on the walls and towers, and in the narrow embrasures from which their musquetry could tell.

Let us glance for a moment at another group. While this boisterous and desultory meal, so abruptly concluded, was yet proceeding, old Con Donovan, the butler, was enjoying, in the privacy of his own chamber, a pleasant booze with Dick Goslin and Tim Dwyer, the two squires who, as we have already mentioned, in their several capacities, followed the fortunes of Percy Neville. The butler's chamber was a small stone-vaulted apartment in one of the flanking towers, with a single narrow casement peering, like a miniature tunnel, through the thickness of the wall, and commanding a circumscribed but pleasant view of the quaint white statues and trim yew hedges of the formal flower-garden we have already mentioned. All was, however, now dark without; and in the butler's snuggery no blinking candle, with lengthening wick and feeble ray, gleamed dismally upon the jolly party; but their carousal was meetly lighted by the joyous blaze of wood and turf, flaming in the hearth, strong, fierce, and roaring as the spirit of revelry itself. By a clumsy, strong-jointed table, stored with flasks and cups, and seated upon stout old ponderous stools, the three companions glowed in genial confidence and growing jollity before the warm blaze of the fire, that murmured and sputtered in comfortable rivalry with the fitful moaning of the chill night wind.

Tim Dwyer had never looked so red, so quizzical, and so good-humoured in all his life before. Even the bilious, sharp-faced Londoner seemed touched and kindled with the expanding influences of good fellowship. And as for Con Donovan, he was the very picture of an ancient butler. Sack, sherry, Canaries, and claret, not to mention brandy and usquebaugh, burned and beamed in his ruby visage, and twinkled and sparkled from under his bushy grey brow. Mingling in the jolly character of his visage, was an expression, half judicious, half severe, which spoke of fifty years of exquisite and unimpeachable tasting, and as many of absolute domination over the keys of office. There was not a pimple on his nose that did not represent whole dozens of emptied wine-flasks; nor a wrinkle in his thoughtful face that did not indicate the subtle critic and the judge supreme; while his long fine hair of snowy white bespoke his own venerable and racy antiquity of date. Such seemed Con Donovan upon ordinary occasions. But when he stood before the dark and ancient cupboard, with all its store of burnished plate and blazing tankards, arrayed in lordly display, tier above tier, and the ponderous key of office in his right hand—at such times the porter of paradise never looked half so sublimely conscious of the good things committed to his charge, and of the unparalleled importance of his function, as did the venerable butler of Glindarragh Castle.

Here then in this calm retreat, which might have made a cell for old Friar Tuck, the three companions plunged without restraint headlong into the joys of giddy wassail. Vain were it, in sooth, to follow

Con through all his rambling lore about the O'Briens and the castle; every chamber in the old place had its appropriate tradition—the story of the banshee's tower, and "the room of the candle," Crohore's cellar, the *far na phisogue*, and the "sperrit of the slasher" that haunted certain chambers of the castle; these and a hundred other tales of wonder and mystery the old domestic recounted to his listening guests.

But as their potations waxed deeper, their conversation waxed louder and more brilliant. Con told his very best stories in his very best style, though his utterance grew somewhat indistinct towards the close, but that did not prevent his enjoying their point prodigiously himself and laughing in proportion. From this mood he gradually slid into another, grew amorous, and sung a piteous love ditty, which, however, was so interpolated with hiccoughs as to be scarce connected and intelligible. Tim Dwyer, in a pathetic vein, with touching confidence, ran through his past career, and shed copious floods of tears, while he fervently wrung the hands of his companions, much to their inconvenience. Even Dick Goslin grew loquacious and took a valiant turn, challenging in his own proper person the whole four provinces of Ireland to mortal combat, and defying them to come on. In this defiance, however, he was interrupted by losing his equilibrium, and falling along with his stool upon the floor, where he continued, nevertheless, with unabated courage to challenge and defy the whole Irish population, together with all the barbarous nations of ancient and modern times, with every species of provocative and contumely most calculated to goad them to the conflict. His two companions, who were themselves hardly in a better plight, had scarcely succeeded in helping him to his feet, when the door opened, and a pair of honest yeomen, hot and out of breath, entered with the alarming intelligence that Drumgunniol was in a blaze and the rapparees already in sight.

This astounding announcement was wonderfully sobering in its effects. Dick Goslin, though in a somewhat serpentine course, made his way out of the room, and neither designing to share in the glories of the triumph, if such it should prove, nor yet to be in the way and visible in case the "land savages," as he called them, should get in, he directed his course to a small and deserted kitchen which he had that day reconnoitred, and shoving aside the cover of a large metal boiler, upon which he had pitched as his destined asylum in the hour of need, he tumbled himself into it, and with a little trouble slid the cover back again into its place, and here, comfortless and cramped as was his posture, the heaviness of his free libations gradually prevailed, and he sank into a profound and death-like slumber.

Meanwhile the excitement of preparation everywhere continued within the castle walls, and amid all the hurry scurry, the brave old Sir Hugh, his iron gray locks escaping from beneath his broad-leafed hat, and his short cloak drawn tightly round his shoulders, armed with carbine and pistols, and accompanied by the stout old Stepney at one side, and at the other by his cousin, Percy Neville, crossed the courtyard with a cool and steady pace, and mounting the steep stairs, entered the narrow stone-floored and stone vaulted chamber which overhung the great gate, and placing himself at the central loop hole, looked forth upon the steep avenue which led upward from the foot of the bridge to the castle, and commanded a wide prospect of the surrounding country.

"As I hope for grace," said Sir Hugh vehemently, striking the butt of the weapon which he carried upon the floor, "the villains have fired honest Tisdal's house—that blaze is from Drumgunniol; pray heaven the trusty fellow may not have fallen into their hands."

They all looked wistfully in the direction which the old knight had indicated, and plainly saw the volumes of smoke rolling and heaving in lurid masses, while showers of sparks and broad sheets of flame from time to time illumined the dusky glow with a more dazzling brightness.

"Neville," said the old knight with sudden alacrity, after a lengthened pause—"Neville, your young eyes are fitter for this misty light than mine; see you any thing yonder on the bridge near the farther side of the river; methinks I see a horseman."

"Two horsemen, Sir Hugh, unless I see double," rejoined the young man; "and as well as I can perceive, a sort of mob about them, moving slowly this way."

Had they at that moment been enabled to scan the area around the castle walls, upon the other side of the building, they would have beheld much more formidable demonstrations of the enemy; for stealing onward among the orchard trees, and through the garden and at the opposite side of the river, were seen gathering and thickening, moment after moment, dark, dense masses of human figures, until the very copse and underwood seemed instinct with life; and the number of assailants thus silently accumulating, vast as they undoubtedly were, were rendered terrifically undefined by the deep, impenetrable shadows and cover of the surrounding trees and brushwood, which for any thing to the contrary appearing, might all be occupied by the same threatening masses whose van at every side in sinister silence began to close round the devoted building. Still, too, as death, the little garrison within, in breathless suspense, awaited the expected assault of what, with the dreadful sinkings of dismay, they inwardly felt to be an overpowering force; and many a man who had not prayed for a full year before, now muttered fervent appeals to the God of battles, as glancing along the dark line of copse which straggled from the dense wood around the ancient fortress, he marked the gradual swelling of the noiseless and stupendous multitude, and the slow, onward stealing of their dark and ominous front. As this awful and noiseless inundation of human hatred and vengeance rolled onward, and rose, as it were, gradually but steadily around the doomed building, the hearts of even the bravest within it beat fast and thick; and every man of the comparatively little garrison felt, as with set teeth and riveted gaze he breathlessly watched, as under some horrible fascination, the slow advance of the living tide which was sweeping onward, that he would have gladly exchanged the hideous tranquillity of that lulled and quiet approach for all the roar and clangour of the fiercest danger and the maddest strife of actual conflict. Meanwhile Sir Hugh, and those who along with him tenanted the small stone chamber which we have described, watched with cool but anxious scrutiny the movements of the group who had appeared upon the bridge. Two horsemen, as well as the now fast descending moonlight would allow them to discover, well mounted and equipped like gentlemen, and surrounded by a rabble rout of some hundred men, turned slowly up the approach to the castle gate, and dismounting at the far end, left their horses there, and so with a jaunty swagger they both strode up the broken ascent, followed by their wild myrmidons. The one was a stout, ill-looking, broad-shouldered fellow; the other a dark, swarthy-featured man, of light and wiry build. The reader needs not to be told that he beheld in them "Captain" Hogan and the redoubted Eamon a Knuck, or Ned Ryan of the Hills—O'Moel-Ryan of the race of Cahir-More. Side by side they approached the great gate, and had already come within some ten paces of the arch, when a stern voice from the embrasure over the gateway challenged the leaders of this sinister party.

"Hold," cried Sir Hugh, for it was he who spoke—"what seek you here, sirs, at this unseemly hour?"

"We demand admission under a search-warrant," replied Ned Ryan, as promptly and as sternly.

"A search-warrant!—search—and for what?" demanded the old knight from the narrow embrasure.

"What for?—why, for my gray *coppul!*" retorted the burly ruffian, Hogan, swaggering in front of his slighter companion—"for my *coppul beg greagh* and my elegant cow, *Dhrimandhu*. My darlin' girl, will I never see your blue coat and the white twist iv your horns again. Och, voh! agus ochone, Dhrimandhu!"

The end of this apostrophe went off into the Irish chorus of the well-known humorous song, which he chanted with stentorian lungs, and a burlesque exaggeration of the extremest woe. There was a cool insolence in this buffoonery which stirred the blood in the old knight's veins.

"Have a care, fellow," said he, with difficulty mastering his rage—"have a care, sirrah, and keep your ribaldry within your teeth. It is no light matter, as you shall find, in troublous times like these, and at such an hour, to beset a gentleman's dwelling. Show me the authority on which you presume to disturb the quiet of my household, or by Saint George I'll make my people clear the road, and set you singing to another tune."

"Then you are old Willoughby in person?" said Ryan.

"I am Sir Hugh Willoughby, fellow?" replied the knight.

"Well, old Hugh," continued the rapparee, "you shall be gratified. You want to see the warrant?"

"I demand it," replied he.

"Then look at it," retorted the rapparee, folding the paper closely, and fixing it firmly upon a pike's point, he raised it to the aperture within which Sir Hugh was standing.

The old knight, in the now declining beams of the moon, was with difficulty enabled to decypher a few words of the warrant, but at the foot of it he read in large and marked characters the hated name of "Miles Garrett." Without uttering one syllable, he tore the paper across and across, and stretching his arm from the casement, with indignant vehemence he flung the fragments to the night wind, which whisked them up, and whirled them in an instant over the battlements in a mimic snow shower.

"Is it so you treat the warrant of the king's justice, old rebel," fiercely exclaimed the redoubted Edmond Ryan, who had now fallen back a little, and resumed his station close in front of the crowd who had accompanied him.

"Ay, and even so will I give your soul to the night blast, robber and murderer, if you loiter here another minute" retorted Sir Hugh, bitterly.

The rapparee turned to the crowd who followed them, waved his hand, and in a moment the dense mob had dissolved and glided under cover of the bushes, and the turf and corn stacks, which stood ranged along the steep road. At the same instant he blew a piercing whistle, which rung through the old walls, and awoke the shrill echo of the wood, until it was lost in the wail of the rising wind.

"Och vo-agus, och hone, Drimandhu," struck up the burly companion of Ned o' the Hills, as with a dramatic assumption of the most extravagant transports of grief and desolation, he walked down the broken road to a more prudent distance, where he suddenly threw himself flat in the grass behind a furze.

"You refuse, then, peremptorily to admit this poor gentleman, and to open your door to the king's warrant?" said Ned o' the Hills, slightly hitching his shoulders, and squaring himself like a man preparing for action.

"I refuse to admit notorious ruffians and their hordes of savage banditti within my house, now and at all times," replied the old knight, firmly.

"Then you are a traitor to King James, detected, avowed, and punished."

As he spoke the last word, with the quickness of light, he levelled and discharged his carbine full at the shot-hole at which the master of Glindarragh had conducted this strange parley.

The bullet rang shrilly through the low crown of the old man's hat, grazing the very hair of his head, and without further effect smote upon the opposing wall, and fell flat as a crown piece upon the floor. The sharp report of the rapparee's shot had hardly ceased to vibrate in the echoes, when half a dozen muskets flashing with rapid explosion from the walls, sent their leaden missives chirping by his ears, as cowering low, he ran for a little space down the roadway, and throwing himself under cover, whistled again and again the same shrilly signal; and now were seen dense formidable masses pouring over the bridge, and at a running pace beginning to traverse the upward road toward the castle gate, while from the walls the musketry rattled sharply, and the returning fire from the road side covered the wild advance of the desperate column who rushed upward toward the gate; and now from every side growing, swelling, as the darkness deepened, arose the wild and fearful yell of the assailants, gathering, and strengthening, and rolling in stunning confluence over the old building like conflicting thunders, and piercing the ear of night with the savage hootings of hate and defiance. Spreading, and pealing, and soaring rose the sound, in an uproar so terrific and gigantic, that the very storm seemed to sink in hushed dismay; and it grew almost a marvel that the ancient walls did not rock and topple to the ground like those of Jericho of old, under the stupendous vibrations of the mighty chorus of wild menace and vengeance that rushed, and trembled, and towered in the troubled night air. Within the intervals of this fearful hurricane, but comparatively faint as the "wild farewell" of the crew over whom are closing for ever the black waves of the ocean, might be heard the answering shout of the garrison from the walls, and towers, and shot holes, as with resolute defiance they anxiously awaited the decisive tug of actual conflict.

And now with terrific hubbub and thundering war-whoop the dark and savage multitude, bearing in their van a ponderous beam, dislodged from the mill close by, came rushing madly like a dark wave rolling and pealing up the shingles on the shore, toward the castle gate; bang, bang goes the musketry from the castle—rattle go the shots in return from the cover: hiss and whistle—the bullets sing through the darksome air; and now the dense multitudes are up—are thronging and hustling one another beneath the very walls, and cover in undulating masses of heaving black the steep surface of the road from the bridge, a sea of wild haggard heads swaying and rolling this way and that, and flowing like conflicting tides, so that those who from the castle walls beheld the giddy spectacle, felt their very brains to swim and sicken as they looked. The assailants drive madly onward, they rush and thunder at the oak gate of the castle, driving the huge beam they bear with crashing and stunning reverberation and infernal uproar, against the ancient and iron-studded planks. Well was it for those within that they had so effectually propped and strengthened it in time, with solid stone and rubbish, and carts and logs heaped up and packed together in dense and deep support, else the good planks, hard and massive as they were, must have yielded to the gigantic concussions under which the very walls seem to ring and tremble.

And now, with a stunning report, the cannon on the flanking tower explodes, and wraps the gate and its assailants alike, for a moment, in sulphurous smoke and eddying sparks; but the howling blast soon sweeps and whirls the mephitic cloud away, and reveals the rapparees, unflinching and ferocious as ever, still driving on their desperate assault; groans and wild shrieks of agony are lost amid other sounds. A rabid yell of maddened defiance rising from all sides of the beleaguered building, answers the thunder of the cannon, and with fury whetted and courage confirmed, the wild Irish sustain their as yet fruitless attack, redoubling the echoing shocks which batter at the gate, and momentarily expecting to burst the old oak planking, and to rush pell-mell with all their skeans, and pikes, and matchlocks, into the devoted fortress, and make short work with the garrison.

While the dreadful din stunning the ear of night, shook the old building to its very foundations, the fair Grace Willoughby, with parted lips, and face pale as marble, but lofty mien and kindling eye, looked from the narrow windows of the stone vaulted chamber, in which, as the safest in the building, she and the other females of the household had been placed. It commanded no view but of the castle yard; and as she watched the opposing side, in which the great gate lay, at every thundering shout almost expecting to see the human torrent of destruction burst into the enclosure, she walked from window to window in all the wild but nobly curbed intensity of excitement and suspense. Behind her moved poor Phebe Tisdal, in silent agony of terror, now wringing her hands, and anon clasping them together, and vainly seeking words to form a prayer; while at the further end of the chamber, in unrestrained extravagance of clamorous panic, a group of females wailed and wept with all the wild cadences and frantic gestures of Irish women keening for the dead.

Again, a little apart from them, and still as a waxen mask, might be seen, under the shadow of her red hood, the yellow shrivelled features of the old nurse, who, seated upon a rude arm-chair by the expiring embers of the fire, with closed eyes and trembling fingers, fast and fervently told the beads of her rosary; and thus did even this chamber send forth its contingent of noise, its weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to mingle in the infernal chorus that scared the sober night.

The rapparees had lost not a few of their men, killed by the fire from the castle, whose bodies lay crushed and mangled under the feet of the enraged survivors, and about thirty or forty, besides, more or less wounded, when, disappointed by the obstinacy with which the gate had resisted the formidable force brought to bear upon it, Ryan, whose carbine had been employed as fast as he could load it, in marking every embrasure and loophole in the walls—now with a savage imprecation, resolved on abandoning this plan of attack, and trying another, which as he believed could hardly fail of success; sharp and shrilly he whistled again and again, and as the summons reached his followers, the wild hurly burly subsided, and they retreated, like the stormy scud hurrying before the blast, from the castle front.

Ignorant of the cause of this movement, those who occupied the point of attack, cheered fiercely as they discharged their pieces upon the rear of the retiring groups, and then shook hands, and almost wept for joy, in the delusive hope that the attack was now finally abandoned in despair—and the danger which had but a moment or two before so appalingly and overpoweringly menaced them, indeed safely and triumphantly over-past.

Not a shot had been fired from any side of the castle but the one, the immense masses which beset the building on the other aspects lying inactive, excepting in so far as they joined in the fearful war-cry, which sounded as though twelve legions of yelling demons hovered in the overhanging air, making every echo vocal with their hellish revelry of hate and frenzy. It would seem as though these multitudinous reserves were designed, not for actual attack, but only to prevent the possibility of the escape of a single human being from the desperately defended fortress; and now, in strange and almost awful contrast with the recent stirring tumult, all alike, without and within, sank into hushed and still repose, leaving no sounds save the rush of the waters and the melancholy soughing of the wind to fill the listening ear.

The gallant gentlemen and hardy yeomen, reeking from their recent exertions, their haggard faces smirched with powder, and some among them bleeding, half choked with smoke, and holding their hot muskets in their grimed hands, looked forth into the void space so recently occupied by their terrific assailants, lost in wonder as to the cause of their sudden disappearance, and scarcely crediting the evidence of their senses, which assured them that the Irish had really withdrawn. Some laughed in their excitement, others almost shed tears, some lifted up their voices in solemn and fervent thanksgivings; and there were also some who, smarting from their recent hurts, bitterly cursed "the murderous savages," as they wiped away the trickling blood, muttering many a sanguinary and ferocious imprecation, and swearing many a vow of vengeance.

"By my faith," said Percy Neville, answering a vehement tirade of Stepney's, "call them cowards and savages if you will, but as far as I may pronounce from my own poor personal experiences, their flesh wounds smart as much as those of the politest and most valorous people upon earth; and thus much too I will aver, that in this skirmish they have borne themselves as prettily as any men need do."

"I fear that we have seen but the beginning of this night's work," said old Sir Hugh, as leaning upon the muzzle of his piece, he looked anxiously into the increasing darkness, in the vain search for some decisive manifestation to determine the doubtful problem of the enemy's designs. "I would rather than a thousand pounds," he continued, gloomily, "that I had thrown all the corn and hay into the river this morning—but that cannot now be cured; and praised be Heaven, these walls are strong, and have been proved by fire before; nevertheless, I would fain that this wind went down."

"It blows a fresh breeze," said old Stepney.

"I wish the gentlemen outside would make up their minds at once," said Neville, with a shiver; it's odds, if they don't, but we shall all take cold. Here stand we all cooling, like new candles in a row, while the barbarians are supping comfortably on old Tisdal. I' faith, if they deliberate much longer, I shall, for one, go peaceably to bed—but ha! they *are* at it again."

"And now—God guard and save us; for what I feared is indeed come at last," echoed Sir Hugh, with despairing vehemence. "Were it not for this accursed storm, I would still fearlessly defy them—but—but—we must not despair."

As the old man thus spoke, several lights, like red meteoric fires, came dancing and running in serpentine and wavy lines up the road, and shedding long streams of sparkles in the blast.

"What, in wonder's name are these?" whispered the young man, as he watched the strange phenomenon—"squibs—fireworks!"

"No such thing," replied Sir Hugh, sternly, as he rammed home the wadding of his piece—"lighted turfs to fire the corn and hay stacks—and all the store of turf, and to burn us out if possible."

So saying, the old knight resting his carbine on the sill of the loophole, fired—and, with a yell, they saw the dark form of the foremost runner, roll to the earth, while the lighted coal bounded onward in the blast, till it spent itself along the road in showers of sparks—the moon being now set, the darkness had so increased, that it was impossible any longer to discern the forms of objects, except when very near, so that the will-o'-the-wisp vagaries of these gliding stars alone guided the aim of the marksmen within the castle, and now once more began to swell and peal the same wild war-cry from every side, and the musketry from the walls to flash and clang with sharper echo from without.

"I fear we can scarce stand here much longer," said Percy Neville, for the first time exhibiting something like dismay—"the smoke begins to thicken so, that the place is all but stifling."

Still, however, the shots fell fast, and as he stood by the window and levelled his piece, through the rolling masses of dense white smoke, he suddenly staggered backward, exclaiming with an oath, "I'm hit;" at the same moment his right arm dropped powerlessly by his side, and his weapon falling on the floor, exploded.

"Don't mind me," said the young man, "it's nothing—nothing—it has unstrung my arm for the present, that's all." And so saying, dizzy and faint with pain, he staggered down the steps.

And now the cloud of smoke, white, dense, rolling and eddying in the rushing breeze, and huge enough to hide a mountain in its mighty folds, came streaked with streams of glittering sparks, flying high and low in its rolling tide. And now again, this awful cloud of smoke that tumbles and whirls till every corner, nook, and crevice of the great yard is lost in thickening vapour, begins to glow with a broad hue of deep fierce crimson, now reflected and now fading, anon coming and again lost, and then returning with increasing, widening, deepening glare; while the air grows hot, and the wild yell of the assailants swells and soars from every side, until it seems as it were to overarch the devoted structure in one huge dome of ringing and roaring iron. And now it is done, the flame bursts clear, magnificent appalling—in one vast, surging, living sheet of red, with a sound like the rattle and roar of thunder through the dense shroud of rolling smoke, and over the front wall of the castle, towering high and wide, and spreading and pealing, while hill and wood and sky, glare like a furnace in its terrific illumination. Well was it for all within the castle walls, that the buildings most exposed, were roofed with vaulted stone, and for the most part floored with the same—else all within must have been speedily destroyed—the iron stanchions of the windows, heated to whiteness in the torrent of flame, bent and warped like bars of wax, and the lead trickled down the old walls in streams like tears along the furrowed cheeks of age. The whole front of the building was of course abandoned, and those who had manned its towers and embrasures, were forced by the scorching glare, to fly for safety to the further side of the yard, and shelter within the buildings, where resolutely they took their stand, resolved, whenever the flames should abate, to dispute the entrance of the marauders, to the death. Meanwhile, between the hostile parties there roared a surging gulf of fire; within was wild panic, or sullen despair—the black and deadly determination of men who feel that their hour is come, and have resolved to sell their lives as dearly as they can. Had there lain a passage through the door which opened upon the garden at the side, no threats, arguments, or entreaty, could have prevented the little garrison, though the attempt were the veriest madness and certain destruction—from sallying forth and plunging furiously into the thick of their elated enemies—but that door had been secured both on the outside and within by solid masonry, and now there remained for them nothing but the horrors of suspense, the resolution of despair.

Without—what a spectacle—what a wide sea of upturned grinning faces—long elf-locks, bearded chins, wild gleaming eyes—what rushing and pressing and swaying hither and thither of the dense living mass—what flashing of skeans and pike heads, in the broad red effulgence of the towering conflagration.

Pressing among the burning turf, and heedless of the scorching fire, the foremost of the throng caught up the glowing sods, and hurled them through the arching flame over the castle walls, in a thickening hail-storm of fire. Tumbling, bounding, rolling, hopping, these missiles, speeding like rockets through the pitchy air, burst into fragments upon the pavement, scorching and burning the maddened cattle—who, bellowing, butting, rearing, and bolting in blind fury, broke loose from their pens, and gored each other—rushing hither and thither, and adding new horror and confusion to the frantic scene.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STRUGGLE IS OVER.

The great oak gate had now given way; and through the arched passage the flame was roaring like a torrent through a mill-sluice; and still downward, through the eddying smoke and sparks, poured faster and thicker the storm of fiery missiles from above: and all, amid the fiercest and wildest tempest of thundering execration, triumph, and fury—in which the occasional discharge of musketry, and the whizzing of the bullets, were wholly lost and swallowed up. And now the air grew too hot almost for respiration or sight—stifling, blinding, and intolerable. Forced into shelter within the buildings at the further end of the yard, the desperate defenders of the place stood by the closed windows, with their loaded weapons in their hands; and with contracted brows and pallid faces, watched the fluctuations of the dazzling and gigantic surf of mounting fire which roared and tumbled before them.

Meanwhile, without, the motley thousands thronged and pressed with fiercer and sterner exultation around the outer ring of the gradually receding fire; and foremost, reeling in the gripe of some dozen of the crowded assailants, with his arms bound and face bleeding, and apparently insensible or lifeless, was thrust and tumbled onwards, amid a storm of jeers and execrations, the helpless form of Jeremiah Tisdal. Anathemas, sarcasms, and terrific menaces, chiefly delivered in the strong emphatic gutturals of the native tongue, rang around him, amid yells and threatening laughter to the full as frightful.

"Ring the tongue out of the dog," cried one voice; "rip him up," yelled another; "drive a coal down his throat," shrieked a third; "sink the pikes in him;" "roast the black Sassenach;" "plough him up with the knives;" "lift him into the bonfire;" such, and such like were the conflicting suggestions of the multitude.

"Hands off there," cried Hogan, authoritatively, so as to deter those who seemed most practically disposed; "hands off, ye bliguards, an' take it aisy. Can't yez have common patience, an' not be spoilin' your own sport. Where's the good in skiverin' the prisoner—devil's cure to him, for a black old heretic scoundrel—in such an unrasonable hurry. See, Mara," he continued, addressing the most athletic of the party who held Tisdal; "I'm thinkin' after all, there's no use waitin' with him all night; so just take him up to the top of the gallows hillock, and swing him up in sight of the scoundrels in the castle, to comfort them while they're roastin'."

The mandate was hardly uttered, when the luckless puritan, torn, breathless, stunned, and helpless, was dragged through the crowd, by the wild lictors, who were to preside at his execution; and borne onward rather than walking, was forced up the steep and abrupt eminence, on which, in former times, used to stand the gallows, upon which the lords of Glindarragh were wont to exercise the sternest prerogative of a savage feudalism. A long ladder was speedily upreared, sunk in the ground to the depth of a few feet, inclining forwards towards the castle walls, and propped in front by three or four stout spars. And while this extempore substitute for a gibbet was in process of erection, others of the party were hotly engaged in twisting a strong hay-rope, or sougaun—and now, the preparations all being completed, a wild, half naked boy, with one end of the halter between his teeth, climbed nimbly up the ladder and passed the cord over the topmost round; and as soon as both extremities of it rested upon the ground, the grinning urchin descended with a whoop of savage delight.

Meanwhile, those who were employed below had torn open Tisdal's shirt at the throat; and the old man's bull neck, with all its swollen cordage of veins and sinews lay exposed to the gripe of the rope.

"What are you going to murder me for?" growled Tisdal almost inarticulately, as his eye wandered over the tremendous spectacle which lay beneath and about him. "Don't kill me in cold blood, boys—don't kill an unarmed man."

"Unarmed, you murdherin' wolf, you," retorted the fellow next him, dealing him a buffet in the mouth, which, had he not been so closely wedged among the crowd of his eager executioners, as to render prostration impossible, must have felled him to the ground; and which, as it was, bathed his chin and throat in streams of blood; "unarmed, sure enough; for we took it from you, you black-hearted villain, before you could get in to your friends. But look down there—look at them all, where they're roastin' in hell before you—look at bloody Willoughby, an' the rest o' them."

"For God's sake, boys," Tisdal essayed to plead; "for God's sake——"

The adjuration was, however, drowned in a yell of curses and derision.

"Hell's gapin' for you;" "the devil 'ill be burnin' wisps on your sowl before mornin';" "up with the heretic dog;" "give him a good view of ould Willoughby;" "hang him like a mad dog."

Such exclamations, and a perfect hurricane of Irish anathemas, jeers, and denunciations stunned and overwhelmed the wretched man. And now, amid this uproarious jargon, the noose of the rude rope is forced over his head, and drawn tight upon his throat. He tries to struggle, to cry, to pray—the dreadful scene reels and dances before him—and now the cord is strained—tug after tug raises him from the earth—and with every fresh swing, a yell bursts from the surrounding crowd, of fierce exultation and defiance; but to his ear they sink into a stifled hum—before his eyes a pitchy darkness, flashing with balls of fire, is spread—a ringing, as of mighty bells, is in his brain—an intolerable sense of suffocation and bursting, along with the dull throes of maddening terror, supervene—and now, he feels no more.

The clamorous crowd, straining with weight and muscle, had hardly succeeded in raising their convulsed and blackening victim eight feet from the earth, when the hay rope which sustained his body gave way, and breaking, suffered the now unconscious, though still living, burthen to tumble heavily to the ground.

"Knot it;" "bad luck to it for a sougaun;" "splice it;" and a hundred such exclamations followed; while, dragging Tisdal back, they set him, half upright against the foot of the ladder, a hideous effigy of glaring, livid strangulation—and hastily repaired the rude appliances of this savage execution.

While this scene was passing upon the little hillock overlooking the castle, the main body of the aggressive party, more keenly interested in the progress of the fire, and the prospect of speedily forcing an entrance through the passage which it had opened, scarce turned their thoughts or their eyes upon the dreadful spectacle. The fire had now evidently exhausted its fiercest strength, and was beginning perceptibly to wane; and Ned of the Hills and Hogan were already marshalling the best armed and the most reckless and powerful of their men in the van, to enter the castle, in a compact mass, sustained by the momentum of all the others; who, in a wild rabble-rout would drive onward from behind, the moment the subsidence of the now nearly expended conflagration should have rendered advance practicable.

Matters were in this position, when a cry arose among the more distant stragglers of the rapparees, which speedily spread itself onward, till it penetrated the denser body around the castle walls, and gradually hushed the threatening clamours with which, but a moment before, the surrounding echoes were pealing: "the sogers!—the dragoons!" Such were the words which wrought this magic effect.

"This is the devil's luck," said *Eaman a Knuck*, who, with Hogan by his side, was at this moment, with earnest gesture and fiercely rapid orders, reiterating his commands to the shockheaded, bearded, ferocious guerrilias; who, firmly planted, shoulder to shoulder, with their pikes grasped short, or skeans gleaming in their sinewy hands, bare-armed and bare-headed, awaited the moment when the signal for the last tug of conflict should end for ever the protracted struggle. Suddenly pausing, and with his blackened hands throwing back his damp sable tresses, he turned scowlingly in the direction from which were now faintly heard the distant signals of the trumpet, floating onward upon the night wind, with the fiery and fretted eye with which the hawk, wheeling to stoop upon his prey, might first descry, in the dim distance, the sable presence of the soaring eagle who hovers onward to wrest it from his talons. With such a glance did the swarthy rapparee for a minute scowl into the darksome void from whence this martial music came sweeping toward Glindarragh.

"There are several trumpets there, he said at last, in his native Irish, in which tongue the colloquy was continued; "what in the fiend's name brings them here at this hour?"

"What if we make a night of it, and try a brush with them too?" urged Hogan, recklessly.

Ned of the Hills looked for a moment contemptuously in his face, and then said—

"Pshaw! Mr. Hogan, you're not serious. Donovan," he continued, addressing one of those who stood near him; "get the boys under cover; here, you, Ryan, give them warning at the other side—they must be over the river in no time. It is a cursed chance," he muttered, as the messenger sped upon his mission; "but with my consent, no man shall lift his finger against King James's troops."

The castle and its blazing front no longer rivet the eyes of the surrounding multitude. Doubtfully and irresolutely the gaze of all turns toward the deep obscurity in which the advance of the approaching soldiery is shrouded; one look, of the blackest frustrated rage, the rapparee flung at the old time-worn building, whose chimneys, towers, and battlements, piled one behind the other, rose in the blood-red flame and smoke, more like an airy fabric of fire—an unsubstantial pandemonium—than a solid fortress of ancient masonry; and with a muttered curse, in which were concentrated the very bitterness and rage of his inmost soul, he turned, and in a changed tone, issued furiously his new commands:—

"As for you, Mr. Hogan," he continued, addressing that person, and observing the deep ferocious discontent which impressed his features; "you can act as you think fit; do what you list with your own men."

"Ned Ryan," he retorted, bitterly; "you're little better than——"

"Than what, sir?" demanded the rapparee, with an emphasis so stern, that Hogan paused, and then added in a subdued tone—

"Than a captain in the king's dragoons, Ned; there's no great harm in that."

"Get your men home," replied Ryan, sternly, "or you'll find yourself in the end little better than a fool, Mr. Hogan !"

And so saying, the dark-featured speaker rapidly descended the steep road, threw himself upon his good horse, and sate by the bridge head until all had passed over. Then, just as the front ranks of the buff-coated dragoons began to show themselves in the red light of the still glowing fire, as their vanguard appeared above the brow of the eminence, which, at a distance of a few furlongs, and upon the same side of the river, overlooked the old fortress of Glindarragh, he wheeled his steed, and riding slowly over the bridge, was soon hidden among the close stems and branches of the old oak wood.

Amid the wild confusion that reigned within the castle walls, the frantic lowing of the cattle, and the busy clang and clatter of renewed preparation, it was long ere the sounds which had already reached the attacking party, were heard by those within. From the flanking towers, farthest removed from the still burning masses of corn and turf, the hurried movements of the rapparees had, indeed, been discovered, though the cause of this general and sudden withdrawal of the wild Irish, as the defenders of the castle called them, was as yet a mystery ; and the jaded and heart-sick garrison scarcely dared to entertain the hope that this cessation of hostilities would not like the last, prove but the prelude to some new assault, if possible more terrible than that they had already experienced.

As the fire rapidly subsided, those upon the summit of the towers, however, at last discerned the martial front of the cavalry, and heard the shrilly braying of the trumpets, as, in obedience to the signal, a squadron of dragoons clattered down the broken road, and crossing the steep bridge, halted, and formed at the opposite end— their buff-coats and low-crowned cocked hats showing clear and sharp in the light of the fire, as they might have done in the blaze of noon. These were quickly followed by two other squadrons, who, dismounting at the bridge, unslung their musketoons, and spread themselves partly among the wood at the far side of the stream, and partly upon the hillock and rising grounds which overlooked the castle and the adjacent road ; and meanwhile, the whole body of horse, with the clang of hoofs, and ringing of accoutrements, and the occasional hoarse voice of command, and the heart-stirring blast of the trumpet, preluding every new movement, began to advance at a walk, in all the imposing silence and regularity of military order, full in the lurid glow of the subsiding conflagration, down the steep and winding road to Glindarragh Castle.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DRAGOONS IN THE GREAT HALL—THE EXECUTION.

The dragoons halted, and dismounted upon the road leading up to the castle gate, until the fire already subsiding had sunk into red masses of glowing embers; and the lighter fragments of the corn and hay, which had blazed so fiercely but an hour before, now swept in trains of sparks along the howling wind, and, strewn high in the troubled air, floated away into the darksome void.

Meanwhile, the party within the walls, relieved from the more urgent terrors of their situation, had already begun to speculate, with anxious suspense and alarm, upon the purpose with which the troops—the neighing of whose horses, and the loud voices and laughter of whose soldiery already filled their ears—had arrived before the castle walls.

Those who are acquainted with the melancholy history of the times of which we write, need not to be reminded of the terror in which, but too justly, the new levies of Tyrconnell were held by the perplexed, out-numbered, and (as it must be confessed) the disaffected Protestant population of the country. The excesses of these troops did not, perhaps, transcend those committed in numberless similar cases by other soldiery; but, in addition to the licentiousness and rapacity from which no army in a relaxed state of discipline is free, there were here old heart-burnings to be slaked, and old scores to be settled—feuds and animosities the most bitter and implacable; and when we reflect upon the defencelessness of the Protestant population of Ireland every where but in the north—when we recollect the opportunities and excuses for oppression which their notorious and not unnatural sympathy with the already successful revolutionists of the sister kingdom afforded in abundance—and when we consider the temper of the times, and the savage and ferocious antagonism in which Irish parties had conflicted even within the memory of the then existing generation, it is only wonderful that the Protestants of the south and west were suffered to escape as well as they did. Ireland was, at the time we speak of, actually the theatre of war. The gallant Enniskilleners, unsupported as yet by a single company of regular troops, maintained an adventurous and brilliant struggle against the royalist forces in the north; and these military collisions with the brave volunteers of Ulster, while they chafed and provoked the fiercer and more fiery antipathies of the two antagonist parties, served also to involve in a too just suspicion of actual disloyalty to James, the Protestant population of the other provinces. Under the menacing and almost desperate circumstances of the royalist cause, it is, therefore, scarcely to be wondered at that measures of extreme severity should have been directed by the Jacobite government against a party justly feared, and more *dreaded*, perhaps, than actually disliked. The sympathies of the Protestants, and, whenever they could give it, their co-operation also, went zealously with the invading army, and threatened with multiplied and formidable dangers the interests of an already well-nigh ruined and almost desperately embarrassed dynasty. If obsolete statutes were, therefore, revived and enforced, and quibbling law points raised to disarm them in masses, or to disable and crush them in detail, the zealous loyalist who availed himself of such tortuous instruments, found ample justification for the equivocal nature of the means employed, in the paramount importance of the ends which he pursued. An army of upwards of forty thousand men, almost entirely newly raised, and, for the greater part, ill-officered, and scarcely half disciplined, held undisputed possession of the greater part of the country; and while the executive, in times so excited and "out of joint," wanted the power, even had it possessed the will, to control their licentiousness, they in turn were inadequate to restrain the excesses of the native marauders, who, under the well-known name of rapparees, pillaged and laid waste the property of the country, and carried on a trade of outrage and rapine upon their own account. It is, therefore, injustice to judge the severities and the losses sustained by the Protestant population of Ireland during that terrible struggle, by the rules which would apply to well-affected subjects, and in peaceful times.

The passage into the castle being now safe and free, and the fires everywhere nearly spent, the officer in command of the detachment, accompanied by several others, and followed by a guard of dragoons, rode slowly through the open archway and into the castle yard. Amid the wreck and confusion which here presented itself—the cowering cattle, broken pailings, and smouldering turf—old Sir Hugh Willoughby and a party of his friends, some of them bleeding, and all grimed and smutted with gunpowder, heated with exertion and bleared with smoke, stood together to receive their military visitants, and presented a group, haggard and wild enough in all conscience.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," exclaimed the officer, as he walked his horse in front, and fixed his eye upon the little party with a stony and imperious gaze; "my business is with him. If Sir Hugh Willoughby be among you, let him come forward."

"I am here, Sir Captain," replied the old gentleman, with more than equal hauteur, advancing a pace or two in front of his friends, "and desire to know your message."

"You *shall,*" interrupted the officer, impassively. "Cornet Burke," he continued, addressing an officer by his side, "let half the squadron keep the gate, and the other half dismount and follow me."

"Where is your authority, sir, and what your purpose?" demanded the knight, whose fiery spirit was stirred within him.

"The king's colours, sir, in times like these, are authority sufficient with all loyal men; and for my purpose, I shall unfold that presently," retorted the officer, coldly, as he dismounted, and gave the bridle of his horse into the hand of one of the attendant guards.

"Be pleased, Sir Hugh Willoughby," continued the officer, "to lead the way into the great hall—I attend you, sir."

This was added in a tone of emphatic command, which seemed to say, "hesitate or demur at your peril;" and Sir Hugh, with an effort which nothing but an overwhelming sense of the madness of attempting resistance, and the ridiculousness of exhibiting an unavailing irritation and reluctance enabled him to exert, proceeded to lead the way to his own castle hall, accompanied by the little party of his friends, and closely followed by the commander of the detachment and his subordinate officers, the file of dismounted dragoons bringing up the rear.

In this order the irregular procession entered the long and now deserted chamber, to the upper end of which the officers proceeded, while the guard halted and formed in front of the doorway, and Sir Hugh and his assembled brethren stood aloof in a body at the foot of the long table, whose further extremity was occupied by the swarthy colonel and his party. With a stern and moody curiosity he scanned the extensive chamber, illuminated as it was by the red glare of some dozen torches, and then his dark eye fell sternly and coldly upon the motley party at the further end. Meanwhile they had ample leisure to admire, were they indeed disposed for any such emotion, the symmetry of his graceful and athletic form, and the striking beauty and nobleness of his stern and handsome features.

Had Sir Hugh recognised in the imposing form on which he looked, the champion to whose strong arm he owed his daughter's safety, gratitude might for the moment, if for no longer, have overcome the harsher feelings which struggled in his breast. But whatever he was hereafter to learn of the handsome swordsman before him, at present he knew him not.

"Gentlemen," said the officer, addressing them in a deep and peremptory tone, which well accorded with the haughty and decisive character of his pale face, "some of you, I see, are armed; in the first place, then, in the king's name, I charge you, deliver your weapons into the keeping of the guard at the door. Corporal Flaherty, advance two paces, and receive the gentlemen's arms."

The order was obeyed in silence by the grinning corporal, whose face, as he eyed the little group, wore an expression of coarse exultation and derision, which was anything but conciliatory.

Some shook their heads resolutely, others hung down theirs with a sense of bitter humiliation, others again exchanged significant looks of menace, and some even clutched their muskets with a firmer gripe, and laid their right hands on the locks. This hesitation and confusion, however, was little favoured by the stern soldier who presided, and the orders "unsling your carbines,"—"ground arms,"—"prime and load," delivered in a rapid succession, and followed by the jingle of some dozen of iron ram-rods, precipitated the crisis ere time was given for deliberation, or even for action.

"Surrender your weapons, my friends, obediently; let us give the adversary no needless advantage over us," said Sir Hugh, mournfully. "God knows!" he added, passionately, and smiting his sinewy hand upon the table, "were it not that the king's name enforces the demand, I would yield my weapons only with my life."

The obvious agony of the brave old man seemed, in some sort, to touch the stern nature of the colonel, for he said—

"Your courage, Sir Hugh Willoughby, is not disputed, and if you like it better, for the sake of honour, loyalty, and obedience to the laws, I will *entreat* you and your friends to yield up your arms peaceably, and without delay; and further, gentlemen," he continued, "you will not object to giving your names and places of abode, as my duty obliges me to make a list of all whom I have found in arms in this place. Captain Lutterel, you will please, yourself, to see to the drawing up of such a list."

While the measures necessary to carry out these directions were going forward, the stern young officer in command again addressed himself to Sir Hugh.

"It is right, sir, I should at once inform you," said he, abruptly, "that two companies of my dragoons are billeted upon you, for how long will depend upon orders from Dublin Castle; for the rest you must find quarters for to-night."

"Two hundred men and horses billeted upon one gentleman's house!" cried Sir Hugh, with wrathful astonishment. "So, heaven guard me, but this is the very extremity and extravagance of oppression!"

"It is no affair of mine, sir," replied the officer, coldly. "If you deem yourself oppressed, you had best memorial the Lord Lieutenant."

"Memorial him!—memorial the arch-fiend rather!" cried Sir Hugh, stamping furiously upon the floor.

"You must not lose your temper, Sir Hugh," interrupted the soldier coldly, "or you may chance to lose something not so easily recovered."

"What's *that?*" demanded the old man, vehemently.

"Your *life*, sir," replied the colonel.

"My *life!*" responded the old knight, passionately—"my life! God knows 'tis little worth—God knows how cheap I hold it!"

The knight spoke these words with such a sudden and mournful change of voice and aspect, that his friends gathered about him, and bidding him be of good heart, and fear not for the issue, shook him by the hands, and pledged their souls and honours to stand by him to the last, with protestations so passionate and fervent as only in scenes of transcendant excitement are evoked.

While this was passing, an officer entered the room, and, raising his hat, observed—

"We have secured two prisoners, colonel."

"Where are they?" asked he.

"In the yard, sir," replied the subaltern, "with a corporal's guard."

"March them in then," replied Torlogh O'Brien.

And forthwith, under a guard of five dismounted dragoons, two men were led into the castle-hall, and exposed to the full blaze of the torch-light.

One of these was no other than Jeremiah Tisdal, who, stupified and bloody, torn, soiled, and bare-headed, was yet instantly recognised by his friends, and, after a few words of explanation from Sir Hugh, was released without further question; the other was a red-headed, ragged peasant, with a low forehead, covered with the coarse, bushy red hair which almost touched his shaggy eyebrows, and overhung a pair of small deep-set eyes, in which gleamed a wild and fitful light, something between ferocity and cunning, as he took a rapid, and, as it seemed, a curious survey of the chamber and its occupants; a coarse foxy beard covered his upper lip and chin, and upon his face, which was deadly pale, and marked with blood, the moisture of anguish and exhaustion was shining.

"Is the dog wounded?" asked Torlogh, observing the blood-marks upon his face.

"Upon my showl he is, an' twiste over, your honour," replied the corporal; "a bit iv a scratch in the pole, and a shot in the thigh."

"So, scoundrel!" continued the superior, addressing the prisoner in a tone of calm but very ominous severity, "you are one of the savage banditti who have burned corn and hay enough to-night to have maintained a regiment of the king's horse for half a year to come! What have you to say for yourself?"

The fellow jabbered something in Irish.

"What does he say, Corporal Flaherty?" demanded the officer.

"He says as how the leg's unaisy wid him, your honour, colonel," answered the man, rendering, as well as he could, the native tongue into English.

"He is but one of the rabble rout, not worth questioning," muttered the officer. "Take that knife from him."

"It doesn't matther, your honour," responded the corporal, obeying, however, the order, and drawing the rudely-fashioned skean, with its rough wooden handle, from among the wretched man's rags, and laying it upon the table; "it doesn't matther, for his arms is fast enough with a halther."

And, as if to make assurance doubly sure, the burly corporal drew the rope which bound his arms behind with an additional wrench, which amounted nearly to dislocation, and sent a flush of pain into the wretch's pallid face.

"Ask him for what use he designed that knife," continued the officer.

"He says, your honour, it's to help you to rip up the Sassenachs' bodies," responded the interpreter, with a chuckle, while the red-haired savage grinned with a ferocious scowl, as he glanced quickly from man to man.

"How are we to deal with these brigands, these savages?" said the colonel, throwing himself into a chair and addressing himself to the officer beside him, as he pointed carelessly toward the prisoner. "How restrain and bridle their enormities and violence, except with a strong arm and a high hand; their burnings, and their plunderings, and their butcheries, these wretches lay to the account of the king's service, and those who suffer by *their* outrages and rapine, charge, and naturally so, their wrongs and losses upon the royal cause. This must be mended—the king's army must not be involved in the guilt and disgrace of such proceedings; we must deal strictly with their perpetrators, and by conspicuous examples of present severity, rescue the character of the army and the government from every imputation of favouring or tolerating these enormities; this duty I at least will steadily perform. Remove the prisoner to the yard," continued he, with stern tranquillity. "Are your men loaded?" he added, turning to the officer at the head of the guard, the subaltern replied in the affirmative.

"Send out a corporal with six men, and let them fire upon that dog," continued the colonel; "and stay—we must give these murderous freebooters a lesson—let the body be kept, and choose a high spot of ground to hang it upon tomorrow morning."

Though the unfortunate man, whose sentence was thus pronounced, knew not one word of the language in which it was spoken, he gathered something of its purport from the looks of those who surrounded him, and from the movement of the guard at the door. Faint with loss of blood, and stiff from his wounds, the wretched prisoner appeared to acquire new strength with the frenzy of despair; bound as he was he flung himself on the ground, and though overpowered in an instant, and lifted up, and dragged, and hustled forward toward the door, he still struggled frantically, and clung to every object on which he could clutch his fingers, shrieking, in his native tongue, alternate defiances, curses, and entreaties, alike fruitless as the idle wind, gnashing his teeth and tugging and hissing till the white flakes hung upon his red bristly beard. Thus was he heaved, thrust, and jostled forward; and as he passed the door, one last look of such inexpressible imploring, despairing terror, he cast behind him, as might have smitten many a heart less stoically inflexible with its mute appeal; and then with something between a scream and a burst of sobs and wailing, the struggling and wounded prisoner was hurried into the outer space, and at the same time the words—"Shoulder your carbines—right face—quick march," brought half a dozen dragoons, with faces in whose sombre and lowering expression was legible their inward revulsion from the dreadful duty they were called upon to perform, in a double file after them into the yard.

A few moments more and a sharp, ringing volley from without announced that the wild and reckless existence of the rapparee was over; and now began the clatter and bustle, the uproar and swearing, to-ing and fro-ing of the soldiery, as with such order as could be maintained amid a scene of hurry and confusion, they proceeded to distribute their horses in the stabling of the castle; the ungirthing and wisping down of steeds, snorting and neighing; the ringing of spurs, and the clang of sabres on the pavement, and the occasional blast ot the shrilly trumpet, and the harsh voice of command, all commingling, rose in a strange Babel chorus of martial tumult to the sky, and made meet music for the hurry-scurry movements of the soldiers, some stripped to their shirt-sleeves, crossing this way and that with buckets of water, or hats-full of corn; others in their buff coats and cocked hats, taking the matter easily, and smoking their pipes as they stood in little knots with their horses' bridles hanging on their arms; while they laughed, and swore, and puffed together in high good humour; and all this motley and exciting scene, lighted up, now here and now there, by the red torches which passed hither and thither among the crowd.

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Now all is quiet—the sentinels have mounted guard, and with shouldered carbines, pace and re-pace the echoing archway where the great gate stood, singing as they march, from time to time, snatches of old Irish minstrelsy, that borne on the sighing wind fall soothingly upon the ears of those whom anxious thoughts keep sadly waking, and mingle sweetly in the far off dreams of many a slumberer.

Torlogh O'Brien walks, alone, with slow and mournful steps, through the great hall of his ancestral home. What associations, what memories, what traditions, gather around him; like the wild harping of a thousand minstrels, resounding in heart-stirring swell—the deeds, the glories, the ruin of his house, ring in proud wails and martial dirges, through the silent chamber, and giant forms of other times rise in majestic pageant, and people its darkness. To him the still void is teeming with all the grandeur and thunders of the fiercest life; but amid the sable throng—dark spectres of murder, pealing dire menace in his ear, and beckoning the last of the ancient race to vengeance—glides one bright form, radiant with heavenly beauty, before whose soft effulgence the murky phantoms glide back and vanish—while her low voice of silvery music, with magic power, swells through the conflicting uproar of infernal clamour, and prevails in plaintive and celestial harmony. Angelic form—spirit of heart-subduing music!—clothed in such victorious gentleness and lovely might, he sees in thee the form of her whom his brave arm has rescued—thy music is her voice. Grace Willoughby! thy beautiful phantom stills and rebukes the tumult of his fierce hereditary hate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SLASHER—THE BLACK GUEST OF DRUMGUNNIOL—THE ALARM.

We need not stop to tell how, early in the morning, ere the cold grey of the coming dawn had warmed into a blush before the rising god of day—amid the shrilly clangour of trumpets, and the ringing and jingling of accoutrements, and the neighing and thundering tramp of war-steeds—several successive detachments left the castle, until the body of the king's cavalry who occupied that fortress had dwindled down to two companies, about two hundred men, together with their colonel and other officers, now occupying Glindarragh, and destined, perhaps, for some time to do so, as the head-quarters of the regiment.

The noise and bustle of departure, and all those stirring sounds of military preparation and movements, fell heavily and painfully upon the fevered ear of Percy Neville, who lay, with throbbing temples and parched lips, weak and in sore anguish, upon his hot and sleepless bed. The roll of the kettle-drums and the swell of the trumpet seemed, in his distempered fancy, somehow identified with the fiery heat and pain which tormented him—a part of his own fevered and agonized sensations; and these sensations in turn seemed again something no longer within himself, but rather, as it were, so many external influences, perplexing and tormenting—moving with the moving soldiers, and waxing more oppressive and thrilling with the wearisome clatter, and laughter, and shrilly trumpet sounds, which vexed his sick head: the dulness and stupor of dreaming were upon him, with all the reality of pain—an anxious, restless helplessness—which seemed always prompting the monotonous idea that some slight adjustment of the tossed and crumpled bed-clothes, or some new arrangement of his weary and burning limbs, if he could but achieve it, would assuage all his torment, and refresh and relieve effectually his aching head and harassing fancies.

Let us glance for a moment at another chamber, blessed with a very different tenant. We left Mr. Richard Goslin, a gentleman who had an invincible repugnance to doing any thing but precisely what he was hired to do, coiled, for double assurance alike against the troublesome importunities of his friends and the more troublesome molestations of his enemies, securely in the bottom of a huge iron caldron, in a sequestered apartment, the orifice in the boiler being covered over with much dexterity, as we have described, by the cautious contrivance of its interesting tenant.

Now, it so happened that, early in the morning, hot water being in great request, two of the handmaidens of Glindarragh bethought themselves of the identical caldron in which our friend had enshrined himself with such admirable providence and profound mystery; and—one with a lighted candle and a bundle of bog-fir, the other with a mighty hamper of good dry turf—they both entered the little chamber together, neither caring to visit it alone, for sundry fearful considerations—to wit, the generally accredited reports which stated that a certain quondam servitor in the castle, whose pugnacious and dare-devil dispositions had earned for him, while in life, the expressive appellative of "The Slasher," was wont, for lack of better employment in his disembodied state, to frequent that uninviting apartment, and there, under divers strange disguises, varying in an ascending scale, from tom-cats and black rabbits up to full-sized men in armour, to play all manner of unmeaning and unmanly pranks upon defenceless females, and occasionally, as they expressed it, even going so far as to take a rise out of the men. Not caring, therefore, to loiter unnecessarily in these haunted premises, the two wenches hurried through their task with all possible dispatch; and just as they had completed the arrangements of the turf, and applied the light, so that the thin blaze began to writhe and curl through the crisp sods and crackling wood, they heard, or thought they heard, a strange, unearthly sound, whether proceeding from above, or below, or behind them, or before, they neither could devise. This was no trick of fancy; their senses had not played them false; they had heard, in truth, a long-drawn grunt, which proceeded in an uneasy movement from the slumbering tenant of the caldron, and boomed in cavernous reverberation and half-stifled echoes from the metallic inclosure. The girls clung to one another as they gazed around them; but nothing met their search; and as the sound was not repeated, they took courage, blessed themselves, and hurried to complete their labours, by drawing water at the well in the castle-yard. While they were thus employed, the fire beneath the caldron began to act, the air within became gradually rarified and heated, like that of an oven; and its temperature at last reached such a pitch, that Dick Goslin awakened slowly from a dream, in which the great fire of London, and other images of a like glowing kind, were awfully combined, and found himself in a perspiration so profuse, and in a state of impotence so absolutely helpless, that he almost fancied himself neither more nor less than a given number of quarts of some simmering liquid, a sort of conscious soup, steaming away at the mercy of the cook, and only to be extricated by the assistance of a ladle. With no distinct recollection of where he was, or how he had come there, and enveloped in total darkness, he yet wanted energy to rouse his faculties, or to move a single muscle. The heat became momentarily more oppressive: a faint, half painful, half luxurious languor overpowered him, from which he would not, if he could, have released himself; and thus gradually dissolving into brine and vapour, the grosser elements of what had once been Dick Goslin lay passively in his enervating retreat.

Meanwhile, the two strapping wenches returned with a mighty tub of pure cold water between them. With marvellous strength, and almost apoplectic struggles, it was lifted, by their united efforts, to the brink; and while one of them slipped aside the cover of the boiler, the other, in a twinkling, soused the sparkling, ponderous torrent full into the caldron. What language can describe the shock, the astounding revulsion which seemed at that instant to reverse all the functions of Dick Goslin's corporeal system, and, as it were, to turn him inside out and upside down, and drive him ten thousand ages backward into a pre-existent state! With something between a sob and a shriek, he started up madly from his lair. The maidens responded with a piercing squall; and she who held the tub, in her terror, dashed it down on him as he rose, with such Amazonian force, that one plank started from the bottom, his head came through, and the tub spun round on his shoulders, and hung there like a gigantic suit of armour—back-piece, breast-plate, and gorget, all in one. Without trying to extricate himself, he rushed in a state of frenzy after the terrified girls, who careered along the passages, shrieking—"The Slasher! the Slasher!"—an ejaculation which Mr. Goslin believed to be elicited by some object of terror behind himself, and which, therefore, lent but new wings to his pursuit. In their terrified flight, several other maids, who, peeping from other chambers, beheld the mysterious figure rushing onward in the background, were quickly involved, and with new energy swelled the chorus of alarm, until every passage rang with the terrific soubriquet of "the Slasher." To stem this torrent, however, the valorous butler and adventurous Tim Dwyer started forth in various athletic attitudes; but being neither of them quite so steady as they might have been, had they confined their morning's potations to the pure fluid of which their Saxon comrade had had so much, they were instantly overborne, and, along with the foremost of the female fugitives, rolled upon the floor; and so, one over the other, higgledy-piggledy, the whole troop shrieking and yelling, tumbled and bowled, and Dick Goslin, last of all, with a crash which staved in the tub; and when they arose, full half a dozen persons, all of unquestionable veracity, among whom was Dick Goslin himself, were prepared to swear, if required so to do, that they had themselves, with "their own good-looking eyes," beheld a gigantic form in black armour, in full pursuit of the party, and that having flung the tub among them, he had vanished with a terrific roar. It is, of course needless to observe, that henceforth even the most sceptical among the servants looked grave, and forebore to sneer when the subject of "the Slasher" was upon the *tapis*.

Meanwhile, in this cold dreary twilight of coming morning, Jeremiah Tisdal, with aching eyes and swollen face, scarce half recovered from his last night's strangulation, and with his sombre and sad coloured vesture, but yesterday so quaint, precise, and saintly, now all torn and soiled—stole from the castle gate, and, like a troubled spirit speeding toward the scene of its earthly sins and habitation, glided darkly along the shadowy pathway, through the wild trees and brushwood, among which the damps and darkness of night were still lingering. With trembling knees and quickened respiration he approached his ruined dwelling; there stood the tall gables, gray and wan as gigantic spectres, and through the roofless summit and the sashless apertures of the windows, the cold faint light was staring; the reek of fire still filled the air, and the floating wreaths of smoke rolled lazily about its base, and clung to the damp grass and weeds around. With a gaze of dull despair, he stared for several minutes upon the ruined dwelling-place. He walked toward the yard door mechanically. The sight of a spade, lying in its usual place, however, recalled him for a moment to himself; he snatched it up, and hurried with faltering steps to the spot where his gold had been concealed. Some one had anticipated him, the earth was thrown up around it, the treasure was gone.

"Oh! God of my hope, it is gone," cried the puritan, finding voice in the extremity of his agony—"gone, gone—spoiled—plundered," he continued, frantically, as he threw himself upon his knees, and with his bare fingers delved and rummaged among the loosened earth. "Bligh has robbed me—robbed me of all—the villain robbed his master!—not a chance coin left—the wretch—the robber—the treacherous dog—the villain—may the curse of Gehazi overtake and cling to him!"

While Jeremiah Tisdal thus railed and cursed in hoarse accents, as he burrowed with his crooked fingers among the upturned earth, he might not inappositely have presented to the fancy of the spectator the image of a famished ghoul cowering over some open grave, and searching for the fragments of his unclean feast.

"Gone, gone, gone," he cried, in a voice of almost childish rage and grief, as he sat down in despair upon the cold earth beside the spot, and smote his clenched hands sometimes upon his breast, and sometimes upon the dull soil, until gradually this frantic energy of woe subsided into a sullen, black moroseness, from which, however, after the lapse of some ten minutes, he on a sudden started up—

"Aye, aye," he exclaimed, with a new and fiercer interest, "let's see how Deveril has fared."

With this exclamation, he hurried toward the ruined walls; the lower windows had all been secured with iron bars, which had of course survived the flames, and now showed in sharp black lines against the grey light of morning which streamed through the building. Passing the corner of the still reeking ruin, Tisdal stopped short, with a shuddering ejaculation which had a strange mixture of joy and horror in its intonation—

"Then it *is* done!—ha, ha!—the hunter caught in his own toils, the robber bereft of his spoil, the murderer of his precious life."

The spectacle which elicited these words was one of sufficient horror. Through the bars of a window, within a few yards of which the speaker stood, were thrust the knee and the head of a figure, whose escape had been rendered impracticable by two transverse bars which, deeply sunk in the side walls, secured the rest. The head, and one arm and shoulder, as well as one knee, were thrust through the iron stanchions, and all was black and shrunk, the clothes burned entirely away, and the body roasted and shrivelled to a horrible tenuity; the lips dried up and drawn, so that the white teeth grinned and glittered in hideous mockery, and thus the whole form, arrested in the very attitude of frenzied and desperate exertion, showed more like the hideous, blackened effigy of some grinning ape, than anything human.

With a horrible and icy fascination, old Tisdal gazed upon this appalling spectacle, till it almost seemed, to his distempered fancy, that the fiendish grinning thing was greeting him "with mop and mow," as the coal-black, shrunken mask, with its shining white rows of teeth, set off by the hideous grotesqueness of its attitude, met, and appeared to return his fixed and thrilling gaze.

"Deveril! Deveril! muttered the puritan, scarce daring to speak above his breath, as he drew back a little; for though he knew it was but fancy, the light curling smoke rising between him and that fearful object, gave to it an appearance of motion, which enhanced the horrible effect of the spectacle upon his imagination. "Deveril! Deveril!—this is horrible! Who could have thought he'd have struggled so hard? Why did they not pike him? How could they let him roast there? It was frightful!"

With a violent effort Tisdal turned, and two steps placed the corner of the building between him and that terrible object. A strange feeling, something almost bordering upon a gush of tenderness, came upon him, as he continued—

"Deveril! Deveril! poor Deveril!—it was dreadful!—it was frightful!—he was my staunch companion in my evil days. Oh, Deveril!

Deveril!—he saved my life once—why did I forget Blackheath? Oh, Deveril, was it for this you saved it? Oh, my God! that I could call him back!—or—or at least that he had died elsewhere, and an easier death! He was my comrade—*my* comrade—when no one else would consort with me! Is he dead?—is he quite dead? I wonder is he quite—quite dead? If he had but life enough left to forgive me!—oh, that he had but life enough to forgive me!"

Thus speaking, with a strange hysterical revulsion of feeling, Tisdal distractedly returned to the spot where first the dreadful apparition had met his eye. There, fixed as the bars themselves, still stood the awful, monkey-like figure, black and grinning as ever.

"Deveril! Deveril!—old boy, Deveril!" cried his former associate, almost frantically; but the sounds echoed unheeded through the empty walls, and the thin vapour curled, undisturbed by breath or movement, like the smoke of his torment for ever ascending about and above the sooty, grinning effigy. "Deveril! Deveril! is there any life in you? Old fellow, it's I—it's Tisdal—burnt brandy! Oh, God! Deveril! Deveril! won't you answer Captain Gordon? It's I—I—it's brother Snap! Oh, Deveril, my boy, you saved me—you saved me—I know it—I remember that night. Speak, old boy, one word. I think you moved!—you *did* move!"

Tisdal distractedly snatched up a long charred joist, which lay among the smouldering rubbish, and, stretching across the smoking embers and ashes, he, with the end of it, pushed the ghastly figure. The effect was horrible; for though the pressure was but slight, the grinning head separated from the body, and rolled, amid a cloud of dust, towards Tisdal's feet, while the body dropped back into the ashes and rubbish within the walls, leaving but the blackened arm still clinging and sticking to the bars. If the frightful apparition had spontaneously sprung from its position, and leaped at the throat of its betrayer, Tisdal could hardly have felt a pang of terror wilder than the paroxysm which froze him, as he saw the head of his victim thus rolling and plunging through the ashes, toward his feet. At length, relieved by something between a sigh and a shudder, and trembling so violently that his legs could scarcely bear him, he managed to withdraw as far as the low fence which enclosed the little paddock within which had stood the mansion of Drumgunniol, now but a scorched and smoking ruin, and seating himself upon the low grassy bank, he strove to collect his scattered wits, and to quiet his terrible agitation.

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Let us return, however, to the castle of Glindarragh, where, by the strange and wayward chances of fortune, the stern and fiery soldier, whose manly beauty and gallant bearing, and, more perhaps than all, the wild and melancholy interest with which his name was there associated, had so impressed the imagination, and perhaps the heart, of fair Grace Willoughby, was now become an inmate. Seldom, indeed, she saw him; for whatever his motive might have been, he seemed studiously to avoid alike all intercourse, and even occasional encounter, with the ordinary inmates of the place. There was, however, to her,—she knew not and asked not wherefore—an indescribable interest, and even a happiness in the bare consciousness of his being near—in the feeling that the same roof harboured them both, and that every moment might, by some slight and unforeseen accident, bring them again together.

More abstracted, and more pensive, and more timid, she grew day by day. She would sit for whole hours, leaning on her hand, and reading her far-off fortunes in the clear fire, that shifted and sank on the great hearth before her, or at the feet of her old nurse would seem to listen to her interminable tales of other times, while her thoughts were far away in the dim cloudy regions of wildest romance and sweetest fancy. In love! The pride of Grace Willoughby would have repudiated the charge with high and maidenly disdain. In love! She never even suspected it; or if she did, perchance, for a moment, she haughtily repressed the rising doubt. What could he be to her, or she to him? In love! Impossible! And then to prove to herself how easily she could dismiss his image from her mind, would she take her work, or her music, and for a time pursue them; but what madrigals or tapestry, gentle Grace, could now interest and delight thee as before? None! They are all grown irksome, and thrown aside ere well begun. Alas! are all her light-hearted merriment and pleasant pastimes—the thoughtless glee of girlish innocence—gone, never, never to return? Silent and saddened, with many a sigh and many a blush, in deep absorbing reveries, she whiles the day away; and many an unknown vigil of many an hour she keeps by night; and when at last soft slumber seals her saddened eyes, in how many of the wild and airy pageants of her dreams does that graceful, manly form appear!

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Some ten days had now elapsed since the arrival of the King's soldiers at the Castle of Glindarragh, when, in the forenoon of a gloomy and somewhat tempestuous day, Sir Hugh Willoughby stood, booted and spurred, and with his hat on, before the fire of the old and spacious parlour to which we have already introduced the reader. His horse, for full ten minutes, had stood saddled and bridled, in the yard; and still the old knight loitered, in moody abstraction, by the hearth. Thus anxiously ruminating, his eye wandered from object to object, until it lighted upon the fair face of his daughter, turned towards him with a look so tender and loving that its influence soothed his troubled spirit;

and a smile—not, indeed, the joyous, unclouded sunshine of happier times—but a smile of fond affection and paternal pride, chastened and saddened, as the evening glow reflected upon some time-worn tower, lighted up his rugged features.

"Grace, my girl, we must not be cast down," he said, with a feeble and melancholy effort at encouragement; "the troubles which threaten us, even should they come, and in their worst form, have yet their allotted limits, beyond which they cannot pass, and their allotted seasons, beyond which they cannot endure. Our family have weathered many a storm before; let us remember this, trusting in God's mercy, and prepare ourselves to breast the coming adversity, with brave assurance of his powerful aid in time of need."

There was something so subdued and mournful in the tone in which the old man spoke, that spite of the smile he wore, and the encouragement conveyed in his words, his daughter felt grieved almost to tears as he uttered them; for though she lacked no fortitude and courage to look the coming danger fully in the face, and to meet it firmly when it came, she could not, unmoved, remark the obvious and mournful change which care and anxiety had already wrought upon the old man's once buoyant and fearless spirit.

"The troubles of this afflicted country are, I fear, but now beginning," continued Sir Hugh, seating himself gloomily by the fire; "our country is the destined theatre of war; the King—King James, has landed—is now in Ireland."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the girl, with a mixture of interest and of awe.

"Aye, Grace; indeed and in truth. Advices reached this morning, acquainting the colonel with the fact," continued Sir Hugh. "He has disembarked at Kinsale; they make no secret of it; why should they?"

"Then, father, let us hope that he has so much of the generous nature of true royalty about him, that he may not leave his honest subjects unprotected and exposed to the assaults of violence and rapine," said the girl, proudly. "If, coming as a king, he but carries in his heart one spark of kingly virtue, his oppressed and disregarded Protestant people of Ireland will be gainers, and not losers, by his coming."

"Poor Grace!" said Sir Hugh, sadly.

"Then you see increase of danger in the King's arrival?" inquired she, doubtfully, and after a pause,

"Yes, my poor girl," he replied, dejectedly; "when the King set his foot upon our shores, all hope of a peaceful issue from out our present difficulties vanished. There can now be no accommodation with England; the sword must decide the quarrel; and in the struggle, what ravage, what destruction, what suffering must ensue!"

Grace sighed and changed colour, for her sad heart told her, and with a pang that wrung it, even to the very core, that all the airy fabric of her fond fancy was shivered and dissolving; the loved creation of her deep and passionate imagination, in which alone was now stored all her treasure of happiness and hope, in which, although she knew it not, lay wrapt her very life, was fleeting fast, and disappearing from her sight—for well she knew, that war with all its heightened animosities, if, indeed, its chances should spare his life, must so widen and deepen the gulph between herself and the secret object of her thoughts, that they might never again, in all human probability, meet more.

"Then the—the soldiers will soon go hence?" inquired the girl, hurriedly, after a short silence; aud while she spoke, a blush of glowing crimson mantled in her cheeks.

"I know not, child," he answered, bitterly, unheeding the agitation which had called the conscious blood into her face; "they are quartered here, as elsewhere, but to vex and harass an obnoxious man—to waste the substance of a Protestant—to humble and impoverish—to crush and plunder one whom they suspect and hate; when they have done their work, they will go elsewhere. But hark!" he continued, turning abruptly and approaching the window; "there's some one asking loudly for me in the yard."

As he spoke, they saw the plumed hats (for they could see but these) of several men pass the high-silled casement—the chamber-door flew open, and old Donovan, his purple face, nay, his very nose almost white with agitation, and his silvery locks streaming backward in the air, rushed into the room. With one arm raised in frantic warning, trembling with eagerness, while panic and ghastly woe, and something akin to rage, were struggling in his furrowed face, and glaring in his eyes—

"Master—for God's sake, quick—quick, for the love of heaven," he almost shrieked; "they're here—for your life—your life, master dear, hide, hide. Oh, my God, they're here, they're in—for your life, quick—for your life——"

The old man yelled the last words, stamping like a maniac upon the floor, and hurling the door shut with all his force, he flung himself against it, cowering toward the floor, and straining with his shoulder to the sturdy planks, in a frenzy of vain but almost sublime resistance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WARRANT.

Almost at the same moment when the old servant thus planted himself against the chamber door, were heard upon the outside, voices and the noise of feet; the latch was raised, and there followed a loud and peremptory knocking.

"Leave the door, Donovan—stand aside, I command you," cried Sir Hugh, vehemently.

With a mute gesture of despair the old domestic obeyed, and at the same moment the knocking was still more loudly repeated.

"Come in, whoever you be—come in," cried Sir Hugh, sternly.

The summons was hardly uttered ere it was complied with, and Miles Garrett, accompanied by an officer, and strange to say, by the identical red-faced, sinister looking personage who had a few evenings before placed Grace Willoughby in such fear and actual peril, in the wood of Glindarragh—the ruffian Hogan, accoutred precisely as he had been on that eventful day, and all three followed by a party of soldiers, entered the chamber.

"Ha, Miles Garrett!" exclaimed Sir Hugh, in unmeasured amazement.

His gaunt kinsman answered not, but turned upon him a look before whose ominous significance, in spite of his constitutional hardihood, the old knight felt a certain sinking of dismay. The hard features of the unexpected intruder were unnaturally pale, and through the habitual cunning of his eye glared something wolfish, as with a rapid sweep it took in the contents of the chamber. He waved his hand to the soldiers, who halted at the door, and advancing some paces into the apartment without removing his high crowned hat, he paused by a little table, and resting his gloved hand upon it, drew himself up to his full height, and eyed the old knight still in silence with a look in which agitation and hatred were strangely blended.

"Miles Garrett," said the old man, slowly, and with subdued sternness, as he returned his gaze, "there's ruin in your face; speak out, man—what is your message?"

"One that you need scarce be in such haste to hear," retorted Garrett, slowly, and with something bordering upon a smile, but so hideous and unearthly that it bore no more resemblance to what a human smile should be, than the fire damp of a graveyard does to the blessed sunshine of a summer's day.

"Do you know that gentleman, sir?" he added, sternly, pointing to ward Hogan, who was standing with his legs apart and his arms folded, leering impudently at Grace Willoughby, who, terrified at his presence, stood trembling, while her colour came and went in quick succession, behind the old knight, and clinging instinctively to his hand.

"Do you know that gentleman, sir?" repeated Miles Garrett, with louder and more insolent emphasis.

"Spare your breath, sirrah," retorted Sir Hugh, reddening with indignation; "I'm not to be frightened by loud talking, and you know it——"

"So much for the respect you pay the king's commission," said Garrett, glancing at the officer, to call his attention to the fact. "You have, however, yet to learn, sir, that his majesty has servants who will firmly do their duty, and who will enforce submission and obedience, though they may fail in procuring that respect which every *loyal* subject cherishes for the authority they hold."

"Miles Garrett, once for all, speak plainly," cried Sir Hugh, stamping passionately as he spoke. "What is your business here?"

"To arrest you," replied Garrett, gruffly, and fixing his malignant eye steadily upon the old knight, for he had now perfectly recovered his self-possession.

There ensued a pause of some moments.

"How?—me!" at last exclaimed Sir Hugh.

"Ay, *you*, sir—*you*," retorted Garrett, with fierce and insulting emphasis.

"Me! and for what—upon what charge?" urged Sir Hugh, glancing indignantly from man to man. "Tell me, sir—in God's name tell me, what am I accused of?"

"Treason—high treason—levying war against the king," replied Miles Garrett, coolly.

"Treason!" echoed Sir Hugh, vehemently—"treason; the charge is false, *all* false; you know it, none better—false, false as your own black heart—villainously false! Oh, Miles Garrett, Miles Garrett, you double dyed villain, this is all your doing. Yes, you d——d traitorous —— Oh! that you but dared to leave this feud to the arbitrament of the sword; old as I am, that I could but meet you foot to foot, and hand to hand, in a fair field, and strike but one good blow for my life; but I forget myself—I am half a child, and do but heighten your cowardly triumph by chafing thus in the meshes. I will be more a man."

He turned to his terrified daughter, and while he spoke some words of affection and comfort in her ear, Miles Garrett, addressing the officer, placed a letter in his hands.

"This, sir," said the latter, "is for my superior in command. Corporal O'Higgins, take this letter to the colonel."

The man departed, and Garrett continued, turning to Sir Hugh, and a second time pointing toward the ill-favoured personage who accompanied him—

"You know this gentleman, I presume?"

"I know him *not*," retorted Sir Hugh, more calmly; "but if he were a gentleman, methinks he would know better than to stand covered as you do here, and in a lady's presence."

"This *gentleman* is a chief witness against you," continued Garrett, with a stern emphasis upon the word, "and, as I venture to predict, will prove a conclusive one. Upon his informations you are about to be arrested and removed; and upon his testimony you are likely ultimately to lose your life. Am I sufficiently intelligible?"

"And who or what are you, sir, who are so very ready to swear away the life of an innocent man?" asked Sir Hugh, bitterly.

"Who am I—phiew! What the divil does it matther who I am, or what I am either?" replied Hogan, with a grin and a swagger—

"My thrade's a horse docthor, achusla, says he,
An' I'll cure you for nothin,' allana ma chree."

These verses he sang with coarse buffoonery, and then continued—

"What is it to you what I am, any more than that I'll tell the thruth, an' if *that* puts a nail in your coffin, it's no fault of mine, surely."

"Hold your tongue, sir," interposed Garrett, bluntly. "It seems, then," he continued after a brief pause, and turning again toward Sir Hugh—"it would seem that you are not acquainted with the person of this ——" gentleman, he was about to say, but the recent exhibition restrained him, and he modified the phrase—"of this deponent. Well, observe me, sir, I desire to acquaint you with the nature and substance of his charge; I shall deal with you directly, and above board."

"'Directly and above board!'" repeated Sir Hugh, slowly and sarcastically, and then with a bitter smile he shook his head.

"Ay, sir," continued Garrett, doggedly, "you shall be dealt with indulgently beyond what I fear you will eventually appear to have deserved."

"Miles Garrett," cried the old knight, vehemently, and with an expression which struggled between rage and strong disgust, "forbear to mock me with this loathsome cant. Enjoy your villainous triumph, like the bloody and crafty man you are; but insult me not by naming indulgence, directness, honesty—in connexion with your atrocious mission of perjury and blood."

"This it is to hold the king's commission of the peace in times like these," ejaculated Garrett, with a smile of contemptuous resignation

"What rebel ever liked his punishment yet? Strike high or strike low, 'tis all one—no pleasing them!"

At this moment a firm and rapid step was heard, accompanied by the clang of the long cavalry-sword ringing upon the pavement, and Colonel Torlogh O'Brien entered the room.

The blood, which but a moment before retreating to her heart, had left her cheek pale as monumental marble, now sprang tingling through every channel to the beautiful face of Grace Willoughby, in a tide so full and warm, that her very neck, and even to her temples, glowed with bright vermilion; and her eyes, hitherto fixed in wild alarm upon the strange and dreaded actors in the scene, now sank to the ground.

As O'Brien entered he removed his plumed hat, and bowed with grave, it might almost have been sorrowful respect, to Sir Hugh and to the beautiful lady who clung by his arm.

"Have I your permission," he said, in a constrained and somewhat haughty tone, addressing Sir Hugh, "to confer for a few moments with this gentleman, Miles Garrett, of Lisnamoe, whom," he added, with a slight bow to that gentleman, which was as slightly returned—"I presume I see here now."

"Colonel O'Brien," replied Sir Hugh, proudly and sadly, "you have the power, and, for aught I see to the contrary, the king may soon give you also the right, which I believe you claim, to use this Castle of Glindarragh, and all belonging to it, even as you list."

"This comes," observed Miles Garrett, with a savage sneer—for the blush which, at the entrance of the handsome soldier, had mantled the face of the beautiful girl, and still more, perhaps, Sir Hugh's allusion to O'Brien's ancestral claim, had somehow roused the worst passions of his evil nature into keener activity—"this comes of men usurping what they cannot keep. Cuckoos ought not to build in falcon's nests!"

Torlogh O'Brien's dark eye flashed for one moment upon the last speaker, with a look whose proud and savage fire might well have warranted the image which its glance rebuked; and Garrett, ugly, ungainly, and repulsive—requited the noble glance of the soldier with a look to the full as firm, but one in which caution and craft alone tempered the undisguised and sanguinary ferocity which now lighted up its awakened significance.

Averting his glance from Miles Garrett almost as quickly as he had first bent it upon him, Colonel O'Brien turned again to Sir Hugh, and with an air and tone of proud respect which touched the old knight, he said—

"I have your permission, then, Sir Hugh Willoughby, to remain here for a few moments?"

"You have, Colonel O'Brien—you have," returned the old man, in tone more gentle than he had yet employed; "and though the question be but a form, I thank you, sir—with all my heart I thank you—for the courtesy which prompts it."

Strange to say, the very friendliness of spirit in which this slight respect was greeted by Sir Hugh, had the effect of repelling the stern and haughty nature of the younger man; in an instant the habitual remembrances of inveterate feud were awakened, and the deep chasm of hereditary hostility yawned again between them. He bowed coldly to Sir Hugh, and, turning to Miles Garrett, observed—

"I shall glance again at this letter, the contents of which, as yet, I am but imperfectly acquainted with."

All this while Mr. Hogan, with his hands buried in his waistcoat pockets, stood whistling, in profound contemplation of one of the old portraits which hung upon the walls, and with his back turned full upon the speakers; and in the deep recess of the window, Torlogh O'Brien was soon absorbed in the perusal of the letter.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," resumed Garrett, with singular calmness and gravity, "it is fair you should know what has been sworn against you. This—Mr. Hogan—lost some cows and horses about the beginning of this month; he procured a warrant of search, and having reason to suspect that your herds had stolen them,—he proceeded hither with his friends—and mark what follows; just ten days since, at fall of evening, he asked leave, under this warrant, peaceably to look for his cattle."

"Peaceably!" echoed Sir Hugh. "Good! sir, proceed."

"Peaceably," repeated Garrett, "to search for his cattle concealed, as he believed, within this castle; he was accosted from the shot-hole overlooking the gate by *you*, sir, and denied admittance, insolently and peremptorily denied admittance; he then fixed the warrant itself upon a staff——"

"Would he swear it was not upon a *pike*-staff?" said Sir Hugh, with indignant and sarcastic emphasis.

"Upon a pike-staff, was it?" repeated Garrett, quickly, and paused in anxious silence for an answer; while his eye, intent with cat-like vigilance, watched every movement of his prey.

"Go on, sir, go on—if you mean to speak more, go on," said Sir Hugh, with intense and bitter scorn.

"Yes, sir, if you will; he conveyed it to you, as you say, upon a pike's end," resumed Garrett, again pausing for a second or two at the last word; but receiving no answer from Sir Hugh, he quickly continued, raising his voice as he proceeded—"You, sir, received it, tore it to pieces, threw it to the winds with your own hands, and defied the poor gentleman who claimed admission in virtue of its authority to enter; and now, like a vapouring coward—ay, sir, start, and scowl, and glare as you may—a vapouring, pot-valiant coward, you dare not, *dare* not avow your own braggart action."

Miles Garrett had well calculated the effect his words were likely to produce upon one of his hearers at least, for, boiling with rage and scorn, the old knight was upon the very point of giving rash and vehement utterance to all that Garrett most desired to hear him speak. There was, however, another listener, upon whom his language wrought to very different purpose, so suddenly that it seemed as though an apparition had started from the floor—Torlogh O'Brien stood between Miles Garrett and the enraged old gentleman.

"Forbear!" he cried, in a tone of stern and deliberate command, as, with outstretched hand, he warned Sir Hugh; "forbear—speak not for your life—speak not a word—for your *child's* sake, speak not."

The suddenness and energy of the apparition which thus interposed, in all the impressiveness of command and warning, effectually checked the impetuosity of the knight, and a dead silence of some seconds followed.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," continued the soldier, almost sarcastically, "there is a homely adage which says that least said is soonest mended. Beware of ungoverned passion—and rush not into admissions which may touch your life. Come, Sir Hugh, be a man, and a calm one, or so surely as you stand there, and living at this moment, your enemies will take you in the snares of death."

"Oh! he is right, he is right, dear father—he speaks truly," said Grace, passionately, throwing her arms about the old man's neck, and clinging to him in an agony of love and terror; "answer them not, dear father—for my sake, answer them not. Oh! good sir," she said, with a most piteous smile, as she turned to Miles Garrett, and pleaded sweetly with him, all unconscious of the hideous passions with which she thus essayed to parley, "he is hasty, easily moved, but kind, and gentle, and forgiving; for pity's sake, sir, do not chafe his spirit now."

"Grace—Grace, my girl," said Sir Hugh, turning to her sadly and sternly, "speak not to that bad man; you know not, perhaps you never may, wherefore I say it; but, my child, speak not to him, look not upon him, avoid him as the incarnate curse of our family—one who has been the great destroyer of all that, with us, time can never, never in all its crowding changes and chances—never restore again. My innocent child, my darling—my only, only child—I will not tell you more; but, once for all, hold with him no communion."

He kissed her forehead with melancholy fondness as he concluded.

"Colonel O'Brien," said Miles Garrett, eyeing the officer askance, while his face grew white and livid with concentrated rage, "you attend here under the direction of that letter, and to obey my orders: beware, sir, how you exceed your duty."

"Pshaw, sir, reserve your lectures for your bailiffs and constables," retorted Torlogh, with cold contempt; "we both act under orders, you as well as I, and yours are not, and cannot be, to trepan your prisoner into dangerous admissions."

"I know my duty and its limits," replied Garrett, while his face grew paler and paler, and the scowl upon his brow grew blacker and deadlier, "and one of its behests is to unmask *all* treason and to expose *all* traitors, no matter, Sir Colonel, whose livery they may wear."

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," said the soldier, coldly, and without appearing to have so much as heard the last observation of Miles Garrett, "you are my prisoner—I arrest you under this warrant, which has been handed to me for execution. This second paper is a summons directed to you, and which I now deliver, to attend the Privy Council in Dublin Castle. It is my duty to provide an escort for your safe conveyance, which shall be done; and now, Mr. Justice," he continued, turning to Miles Garrett, "I am responsible for Sir Hugh Willoughby's appearance, and shall deliver his person into custody in Dublin, as required. You have no further business here, I presume?"

"None, sir," replied Miles Garrett, with an affectation of carelessness, "none. *You* are now accountable, and let me tell you, sir, an error on the side of strictness is more easily mended than one the other way. You scarcely *can* be too rigorous for caution in this case; 'tis enough to meet rebellion in the North, we must not let it spread into the South; examples must be made, and shall be before long; above all, be strict, and do not scruple in all respects to treat him as a military prisoner, for such he virtually is; in a word, sir, alike for others' warning and his own security, exercise *severity*. You understand me—severity?"

"Severity! *good*, sir," repeated O'Brien, coldly. "Have you anything further to suggest before you depart?"

"One word more—one word," continued Garrett, as he directed a look in which malignity and meanness struggled for the ascendancy, toward the old knight and the beautiful girl who clung to him with all the moving agony of love and terror, "I would have you prevent communication between the prisoner and any other persons, even those nearest to him in kindred: on that very account, perhaps, the most dangerous with whom he could hold intercourse. You will see the necessity of this measure."

"From the young lady, his daughter, you mean?" inquired Torlogh O'Brien, in the same cold tone.

"Certainly, most certainly," replied Garrett, eagerly catching at the suggestion which relieved him from what even he felt to be the embarrassing necessity of being more explicit.

The father, with a mute gesture of despair, drew his daughter still more closely to him, and, with a bursting heart and pale face, gazed on her loved countenance, while she, clinging to him with the very wildness of fear and love, turned her imploring eyes in mute appeal from Miles Garrett to the soldier, who, with stern and thoughtful brow, was moodily pacing the floor to and fro. One quick glance he stole toward his prisoner, and addressing Garrett, said—

"No doubt, the course you name were safest—wisest."

"Clearly," interrupted the magistrate.

"Would this duty had fallen to another's lot!" ejaculated Torlogh.

"A soldier's duties, and in times like these, are often painful," observed Garrett, with a shrug.

"But then," resumed O'Brien, coldly, "the lady is very young—almost too young to share in treasonable enterprises. What think you?"

Miles Garrett shook his head.

"You really apprehend danger to the king's government in this young lady's being admitted to converse with her aged father?" said Torlogh, sarcastically. "Do I understand you rightly, Mr. Garrett—are you serious?"

"Take your own course, sir," replied Miles Garrett, hastily; "and if there be any miscarriage in the matter, on your head be the consequences."

"Nay, but would you have me separate them from this moment?" persevered the soldier; "were not that undue severity?"

"Sir, I have said my mind already on the matter," replied Garrett, doggedly. "Your duty is plain; what your conduct may be I pretend not to divine."

Torlogh bit his lip, as he for a moment fixed his eye steadily upon the magistrate. He turned, however, sharply on his heel, without speaking, and walked to the window.

Meanwhile Garrett prepared, though lingeringly, to depart.

"You will need to make all possible despatch," he said, once more addressing O'Brien, as he drew on his gloves; "you have a weighty responsibility cast upon you, sir, and I venture to caution you, as a young man, against yielding to any influences, save those of duty only."

As he spoke, he glanced at Grace Willoughby with a significance so obvious that, spite of her fears and agitation, a feeling of a very different kind for a moment overcame her, and she blushed so deeply that even from her neck to her very temples glowed with the crimson tide. Thus she stood overwhelmed with confusion and maidenly resentment, still holding by her father's arm, and with her eyes turned to the floor, while her quickened respiration was visible through the heaving of her silken bodice.

"Enough, sir!" replied the soldier, sharply and emphatically; "and let me caution you in return against intruding gratuitous advice where impertinence may be resented, and where its repetition may be punished. I have no more to learn from you; your presence is useless to me, and obviously painful to others; so, in mere decency, methinks it were better to withdraw."

Miles Garrett was on the point of retorting; but the prudence of villainy prevailed, and he restrained the angry emotions which experience had taught him to control. He tapped Hogan upon the shoulder, pointed the way to the door, and having glanced hesitatingly for a moment or two successively at the other occupants of the chamber, he turned abruptly, muttering something between his teeth, and without addressing one word to those whom he was leaving, strode gloomily from the room.

Overcome with the agitation of the scene through which she had but just passed—her heart wrung with feelings the most agonizing and exciting—poor Grace Willoughby no sooner saw herself relieved of the hateful and dreaded presence of those who had just departed, than, yielding herself up to the torrent of passionate grief and affection, terror and tenderness, which had long struggled in her bosom, she threw her arms around her father's neck, and covering him with kisses, wept and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Torlogh O'Brien, meanwhile, stood stern, dark, and silent, in the deep recess of the window, looking forth with compressed lips and a clouded brow upon the retreating forms of those from whom he had just received his dread commission. He suffered this incontrollable burst of feeling to expend itself without interruption, and it was not until many minutes had passed that he again addressed the fallen master of Glindarragh.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," said he, "I am now, as you are aware, accountable for your appearance in Dublin: your person is in my keeping. I shall place you, however, under no unnecessary restraint. You are a gentleman, and your word is all I require to assure me that you will not attempt escape, while under my charge. We must reach Dublin within five days, and the sooner, therefore, we leave this the better. We have a hundred miles of bad road before us, and twenty miles a-day is as much as my men are accustomed to travel."

"I am your prisoner, sir," replied the old knight, with melancholy dignity; "you have a right to command my movements. In trusting to my honour, as you propose, you shall not find yourself mistaken.

One request I have to make, and that is, that my poor child may be allowed, as you have heard her so earnestly entreat, to accompany her old father upon this unexpected journey. We shall be prepared to set forth, if need be, this afternoon. My daughter may come with me?"

"Surely, surely, Sir Hugh," replied the soldier, hastily; and then he added, more coldly, "I shall leave you to employ the interval in needful preparations—this evening must see us on the road."

With these words, having bowed haughtily, Colonel Torlogh O'Brien withdrew; and thus ended a conference pregnant with the destinies of all who had taken a part in it.

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Leave-taking is at best a bitter task, and doubly so when kind faces and old familiar scenes are but too probably looked upon indeed for a last time, never to be greeted or revisited more in all the changes and chances of this troublous life. Bitter and stern was the pang which wrung the heart of old Sir Hugh, as, with forced buoyancy of voice and look, he grasped the honest hands of many an humble friend; and sore was the grief that swelled in the bosom of his fair daughter as, side by side, they rode down the steep old road to the bridge of Glindarragh, which they were now passing, never, it might be, to cross it more. How did they listen to the sweet sounds which, evening after evening, as far as memory could number, had filled the haunted air of that loved home?—how many a side-long glance of lingering tenderness was stolen at the old gray towers and wimpling river, so sadly smiling in the glorious evening light! As thus silently they looked and listened their last in mute farewell, many a blessing and many a prayer followed the little cavalcade, while gradually it wound its way through the devious woodlands.

The group was, indeed, picturesque enough, and might have claimed a passing glance of interest, even from those unacquainted with its melancholy destination. Foremost rode old Sir Hugh, his face nearly hidden in the folds of his mantle; and almost by his side his beautiful daughter, cloaked and hooded for the journey, and pale with the piteous struggles of harrowing fears and bitter sorrow; then followed the grim, old, trusty Jeremiah Tisdal, and a group of servants in attendance on the lady and her father; and next, at a considerable interval, rode the dark Colonel Torlogh O'Brien, followed by a guard of dragoons. Such was the cavalcade which, upon that evening, wound slowly down the road from the Castle of Glindarragh in ominous procession, taking the highway for that scene of wild and momentous enterprises and events—that rallying point of strange and striking characters—the far-off city of Dublin.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CARBRIE.

It was upon the evening of Saturday, the 23rd of March, in the eventful year 1689, that the cavalcade which we are bound to follow, slowly entered the suburbs of Dublin city. Spite of the anxious thoughts which occupied his mind, Sir Hugh felt his attention irresistibly interested by the strange and exciting contrast which the appearance of the metropolis then presented, compared with the character it had worn but two years before, when he had last visited it. Stir and bustle enough were, indeed, still there; but it was not the steady energy of vigorous health, so much as the distempered excitement of fever and intoxication. Thick groups of men were earnestly conferring in the streets, with energetic gestures and in animated tones, and with occasional bursts of excited laughter; and from every cluster some lounging listener was ever and anon dropping off and attaching himself to some new group, and sharing in turn in their discussions;—whilst mingling with the civilians, singly or in straggling parties, might be seen the stalworth blue-coated militia-men, or the regular soldiery in their scarlet uniforms and cocked hats. Idlers of all sorts, females as well as men, were congregated about the tavern doors in convivial knots, while from within, the merry scraping of fiddles, or the nasal squeak of the bagpipe, or sometimes the sonorous cadences of an Irish song, or the uproarious voices of hilarious or disputatious revellers, came in busy discord upon the ear; and aloft in the upper windows might be seen the lounging, listless forms of half-dressed soldiers, smoking their pipes, as they leaned lazily from the casements over the crowded street. Occasionally, too, a file of pikemen or musketeers, marching grimly upon duty, traversed the crowded way, and sometimes a friar, in the habit of his order, a license which the times allowed, would show himself, giving quaint and picturesque variety to the character and colouring of the endless combinations which shifted and resolved, and re-united, in inextricably-commingling currents, under the wearied eye of the spectator. Troops of jaded cattle, too, with a guard of soldiers accompanying them, might be seen from time to time, lowing and shambling their way to the slaughter-house, about to die and be pickled in the cause of King James. Here and there the scene was enlivened by some tipsy fellow brandishing his hat or flourishing his halberd; while he shouted "God save King James!" and "To hell with the Prince!"—the broad, quaint street along which they moved presented more the appearance of a fair, or a disorderly barrack-yard, than that of a metropolitan highway ; and the air of excitement which pervaded it was, if possible, enhanced by the hammering and sawing of carpenters, busy in erecting scaffolding at points of vantage on either side, and the rapid shovelling of dozens of fellows every where employed in spreading heaps of fine gravel over the massive and unequal pavement—a provident consideration for which King James was indebted to the dutiful attention of his loyal corporation. The town itself exhibited abundant indications of the unsettled and turbulent character of the times. Some of the shops were closed : the battered windows and splintered doors of others testified the violence to which they had been recently exposed. Inns, taverns, and dram-shops alone seemed in full and thriving business. Sentinels paced in front of the church-doors, within which arms and other warlike munitions were stored. Few and far between, might be seen the straight-backed coaches of the few aristocratic inhabitants who still lingered in the city—stiff and ponderous vehicles, blazing with gorgeous colours, carved and gilded, and rumbling and toppling along the crowded streets. As the mounted party whom we are following became gradually involved in this crowd and uproar, Torlogh O'Brien drew his men close together, and himself took his place at the unprotected side of Grace Willoughby.

" The King enters the city on to-morrow," said Torlogh, in reply to a question from Sir Hugh. " These artisans and labourers whom you see, are making preparations for his reception."

" It is, indeed, a strange spectacle," said Sir Hugh, as his eye wandered down the old-fashioned street, with its long perspective of projecting gables, now illuminated by the level beams of the sun, while all its motley masses of human life moved and shifted in ceaseless and ever-varying mazes before and about him ;—" a strange, and, I trust it is no treason to add, a melancholy sight. Every where I see but the boding indications of protracted civil strife, as well as of the coming military struggle which must for years, it may be, make our country the theatre of war, and stain her fields with the blood of the best and bravest of her sons."

" It is, indeed, but too true," replied the soldier ; " every thing portends a coming storm—nor can we know peace or calm until the tempest shall have spent its fury first. How much blood and misery have they to answer for who have, by the reckless extremity of rebellion, involved this fair and loyal kingdom in so dire and desperate a struggle."

" Can you read the motto on that flag, that floats so high above yonder house-tops ?" asked Sir Hugh. " Methinks it waves from the Castle-towers."

" Aye, sir," responded Torlogh, with a stern tone and a kindling eye, as he scanned the distant banner, with its well-defined blazonry of letters; "the words are apposite to the times, and speak home to the hearts of Irishmen: they are 'Now or never—now and for ever!'"

These stern and energetic words, so different in the impression they produced upon the two companions, had the effect of reminding them instantaneously of the entire and irreconcileable antagonism of their views and interests. A silence, gloomy, and for some minutes unbroken, succeeded. It was at length, however, interrupted by Sir Hugh.

"I had for the moment well nigh forgotten, in the excitement of this strange scene, that I am myself a prisoner," said he, dejectedly. "Whither—to what place of confinement—do you purpose conducting me?"

"I shall take upon myself the responsibility of giving you so much of your liberty, sir," replied Torlogh O'Brien, "as my duty will permit. The hurry of these times necessitates many irregularities; and if these are sometimes inevitably attended with hardship, it is at least some compensation that they permit occasional indulgences, such as, in times less lax, we dare not hope for. There are peculiar circumstances attending your case, sir," he continued, glancing slightly at the light form of the girl beside him, "which make it but humanity to afford you so much of liberty and leisure as may safely be accorded to one in your situation. I shall arrange so that the safe custody of your person shall, for a time at least, remain my charge. You can lodge in the Carbrie; you shall continue to be my prisoner upon your parole, and give me your word of honour that you will not absent yourself for more than two hours at any given time from your lodgings. I and my men shall quarter in the next house, and you shall have no further molestation, meanwhile, than an occasional visit from an orderly."

The soldier checked Sir Hugh's acknowledgments by informing him abruptly that they had now reached their destination; and, accordingly, the cavalcade drew up at the entrance of the Carbrie.

We must say a few words touching this ancient building, before which the travellers have just halted. The Carbrie, so called, nobody knew why or wherefore, was a huge old mansion; even at the time we speak of, the suns and smoke of more than two centuries had seasoned its quaint timbers, and dimmed the paint and gilding of its gorgeous ornaments—it had been, a hundred years before, the dwelling of the princely and turbulent Earls of Kildare, whose wayward fortunes themselves supply more of the romance of history, than the wildest fiction which calls itself historic can recount. The mansion was built in what was called the cage-work fashion, the style employed in all the ancient structures of the Irish capital, its walls being intersected by a compact and firmly jointed framework of oak timber, which formed the skeleton of the structure, afterwards completed by building up the interstices with solid masonry. Upon these timbers were cut in the prevailing fashion, and in well marked projecting letters, sundry Latin texts, along with ancient family mottos, while upon every projecting beam-head, and wherever else sufficient verge was presented, stood forth, in proud relief, the crest, or the armorial bearings of the powerful family who had reared it; it showed a wide and varied front of great extent, whose multitudinous projections and recesses were, however, symmetrically arranged, forming a massive centre, and two wings, whose flanking extremities were completed by tall and narrow square towers. As the eye wandered upwards, it lost itself among a goodly row of tall, quaint gables, surmounted with grotesque, and now half rotten decorations in timber. Rusty vanes and fanciful chimney stacks peeped in comfortable clusters, above the dusky tiles and still more dusky ornaments whose paint and gilding had long given place to the soot and dust of time. This vast dwelling-house stood in Skinner's-row, and having long passed from the possession of its original proprietors, was now divided into three distinct houses, each of vast and unwieldy proportions. The centre one had been converted into an inn or tavern, and was, at the time of which we write, one of great resort; one of the wings seemed scarce half tenanted, and was much gone to decay; it pretended, however, to be also a tavern, as its sign-board indicated, where, under the royal shadow of King James's wig and sceptre, French and Rhenish wines of the first flavour were loyally dispensed by the proprietor. The other was employed as a lodging-house, and it was before the entrance of this last, that the cavalcade dismounted.

Having intimated to Sir Hugh, that should occasion render his presence desirable for any purpose, he would be always to be found in the inn next door, and having, with head uncovered, respectfully, and even mournfully bade farewell to the young lady whose changed fortunes made her doubly an object of interest to his generous sympathies, Torlogh O'Brien withdrew; and old Sir Hugh and his beautiful daughter took possession of the dim and spacious apartments which their host assigned them, and on whose painted pannels and dusky carving were still traceable many a half effaced memorial, and many a scarcely legible record of their former ownership and bygone splendour.

The old man saw his daughter to her chamber door, and sighed heavily as he pressed her hand in his; with an effort, however, he smiled as he looked with a melancholy anxiety, which that smile vainly essayed to conceal, upon her young and once happy face. She entered her apartment, and as she heard his receding steps, she threw herself upon a chair, and yielding to the agony which had long struggled at her heart, she burst into a paroxysm of weeping, so bitter and protracted, that even if the worst event which her terrified imagination at times presented had actually befallen, she could scarcely have mourned her lost guide and friend with a wilder abandonment of woe. While the journey continued, the adventures and changes of each successive day had occupied her mind, and more than all, the unacknowledged happiness which Torlogh's presence every moment inspired, had beguiled the sadness of her heart; but now all this was gone, and all her sorrows and her fears returned upon her with accumulated power. Tediously, and mournfully, and fearfully the watches of the night wore on. Many a mournful pageant of happier memory, and many a train of anxious doubts, of harassing and maddening fears coursed one another through her sleepless brain—interrupted only when her startled ear was aroused to present consciousness by the loud songs, or louder brawling of the turbulent and noisy spirits who had pushed their debauches beyond the modesty of midnight, and were now straggling homewards through the streets. At length she slept, locked for a time in deep and happy forgetfulness of all her fears and griefs, and never waked until her chamber glowed with the bright sunlight of that memorable day, which was to witness the stately entrance of the last king of the Stuart line, into his loyal and ancient city of Dublin.

Never yet was an event more calculated to produce a deep and thrilling sensation among the population of a great city, than that whose immediate approach impressed every citizen of Dublin, upon the morning of the 24th of March, 1689, with the exciting consciousness that a momentous and irrevocable scene was about to be enacted within the ancient capital of Ireland. Many a heart that morning fluttered and faltered, as hour after hour told the nearer and nearer approach of a crisis, not only in their own individual fortunes, but, grander far—in the destinies of the empire, perhaps of Europe; many a man that morning rose with a clouded brow and an aching heart, filled with stern and gloomy anticipations of personal disaster, and coming ruin; and many a one, upon the other hand, with head and heart throbbing with the high aspirations of fiery ambition, and the fevered intoxication of rapacity and avarice; and many too, more nobly animated by the pure and generous enthusiasm of a patriotism as fondly, nay, desperately cherished as it was afterwards bitterly and frightfully disappointed. Over how many dark anxieties, and selfish schemes, and noble aspirations of purest patriotism, the red light of that morning dawned, none can tell; but few there were within those ancient walls, of the tens of thousands who were expecting that coming event, who awaited it with no deeper and livelier emotion than that of mere curiosity—with no sterner and more thrilling sensation than the mere excitement of a holiday amusement.

From nine o'clock and earlier, the long line of street from St. James's Gate, including James's-street, Thomas-street, and thence through the new-gate into High-street, and up to the castle-gate, were crowded with eager and excited multitudes; a double line of foot soldiers at each side extending the whole length (a full mile) of this continuous street, kept the centre clear for the passage of the expected procession; the long line of cocked hats and grounded muskets, the scarlet coats and bandoliers of the new-raised Irish troops, sternly reminded the spectator of the fearful military struggle which that day's pageant was too surely to precipitate. The loyal care of the Jacobite corporation had provided an evenly spread coating of fine gravel over the heavy and unequal pavement, in honour of the royal passenger who was about to traverse the streets. Looking upward, the quaint, unequal houses, from their tall gables and steep roofs, down to the very basement, showed at every window no less eager groups of human faces; and from the crowded balconies as well as from the windows, descended rich draperies of cloth and arras, while in the clear space in the centre of the street patrolled, from time to time, detachments of that splendid cavalry, which afterwards, in many a field, proved themselves worthy of a braver king, and a more fortunate cause. Nine o'clock came, and ten, and eleven, and the crowd had as yet had nothing to entertain them except the procession of the aldermen and common councillors in their robes, seated in coaches, and headed by their hot-headed and pompous lord mayor, Terence Dermott, in the state coach and four horses, with the mace-bearer and sword-bearer, and all the other civic officers in attendance—as they proceeded to the boundaries of the city walls, there to greet his majesty when he should arrive, with a loyal welcome, and in due form to surrender up the keys of Dublin into his royal hands.

Suspended expectation partakes of the nature of hope deferred—and if it maketh not the heart sick, is yet irksome enough, and hard to bear.

Thus monotonously and tediously did the hours pass unrelieved except by an occasional scuffle among the mob, or by the appearance of some terrified cur-dog scampering and yelping down the long open space, amid the laughter, hootings, and missiles of the listless rabble—or by an occasional display, from the house-tops, of some new banner, with a motto of loyal vaunting emblazoned on its folds, and which found a ready response in the fierce plaudits and thundering acclamations of the multitude.

Every face that showed itself wore an aspect of eagerness and good humour. The Protestants, of course, who, for the most part apprehended little but mischief from the events of that day, and whose memories were stored with the judicial atrocities of Jeffries, and the then recent horrors of the French *dragonades*, kept close within doors, or contented themselves with peeping, with anxious and sombre curiosity, from upper windows, and the back recesses of their shops—shrinking from remark, and sullenly resolved against mingling in the loyal crowd, or offering honour to one whom England had pronounced no longer King. Exceptions, of course, there were: some in the sincere belief that James meant well, and would mend matters by his influence; others, in the time-serving alacrity of mere subserviency and self-seeking; all, however, with the few exceptions above described, wore an air of excitement and joyful expectation.

Broad as was the street, it was densely crowded—from the castle draw-bridge and Cork tower to St. James's gate, and the distant liberties of the city—at which point, in passing, we may remark, a broad and lofty stage, carpeted and canopied with tapestry, was erected; and upon this platform two harpers, arrayed in the true old national costume—rang out inspiring music from their wire-strung harps—filling the free air with the shrill clangour of those Celtic *maurshauils*, to which, perchance, in days gone by, the ancient septs had marched to battle. Beneath this high platform stood some forty friars, in their solemn and picturesque vesture, and marshalled around a high cross, which rose like a standard from the midst of their ranks; and these, whenever the warlike harping paused, raised in full and mighty chorus some solemn anthem of welcome and benediction, appropriate to the occasion; and thus alternated the warlike measure and the holy chaunt, swelling the full tide of national enthusiasm, like the grand and melancholy echoes of the deeds and the worship of the old days of Irish glory; and as if one master chord of the Irish heart would yet have remained untouched, without some such provision, grouped at either side, were troops of pretty, graceful girls, dressed fancifully in white, and carrying baskets of flowers, to strew in the way before the king. That ill-natured fellow, the puritan author of "Ireland's Lamentation," indeed, insinuates some scandal touching these loyal nymphs of Flora; but we renounce him and his stories, and so pass on.

Meanwhile, in the back lanes and by-streets, the savoury steam of "cussamuck" and broth, the tempting pyramids of gingerbread and oaten cakes, and no less tempting penny-worths of tobacco, in countless profusion, along with casks of ale, and plentiful store of spirits and uskeabagh, allured the senses of hundreds of weary loungers, and pleasantly engaged the energies of many a crowded group.

The chamber which old Sir Hugh occupied commanded a full view up and down the broad street, glittering with its double files of musketeers, and all the blazonry of decoration. Its long perspective of crowded balconies, and windows, and gables, hung with cloths and tapestries of a thousand various hues, shone in the clear March sun; and these, with all the gay flags, small and great, fluttering and floating in the air, and the dark continuous masses of closely wedged men, women, and boys, extending as far as the eye could reach, showed more like some vast theatric pageant, some fantastic and gorgeous scenic structure, than a solid and substantial town, built and peopled for the sober purposes of thrift and business, and capable of standing the wind and rain of centuries. With many a "pish!" and "pshaw!" and many a muttered ejaculation of bitter contempt, and many a darker expression of indignant and gloomy despondency, did Sir Hugh that morning pace the floor of his apartment, betraying, spite of all his professions of contempt and derision, by many a long pause of deep and intense observation, as he passed and re-passed the casement, the deep and momentous interest with which the scene going on without was fraught to him. It was not until the hour of noon had come and gone, that the distant shouting of the multitude, sustained, and swelling, and gathering in wild and exciting volume, every moment, rose sternly to the ear of old Sir Hugh, and down the long crowded line of street, the cry came speeding like the roll of a hedge fire—"the King—the King!" Grace Willoughby looked in her father's face, and thought she saw his colour come and go in sudden alternation, as breathless and stern he arrested his pace at the window, and looked gloomily up the street as far as its winding line would allow. And now swelling and sinking, burst after burst, but still in one continuous roar of acclamation, rolled on the gathering chorus of thousands and tens of thousands of human voices. The squadrons of cavalry clattered in quick succession along the open way, to and fro, with drawn sabres, keeping the passage clear.

CHAPTER XX.

THE KING ENJOYS HIS OWN AGAIN.

Minute after minute elapsed, and as yet no harbinger of the approaching procession had reached them, but the swelling acclamation which rose and pealed louder and nearer every moment; and it was not until fully a quarter of an hour had elapsed, that the front of the *cortege* appeared: at length it came; a gorgeous coach, with six horses and outriders and grooms in the royal livery, rolled slowly along at a stately walk; then came another, and another after that, and so on until six of equal splendour had passed. Then followed a close wagon guarded by a party of French dragoons in green uniform and with drawn swords. These, again, were succeeded by a brilliant cavalcade of about two hundred gentlemen of the city, all gaily dressed, and handsomely mounted. Then, after a short interval came Barker, the major of the royal regiment, in his splendid uniform of scarlet and gold, surmounted by a burnished cuirass, bareheaded, and with his left hand controlling his fiery black charger, while his right arm extended enforced the orders which, from time to time, he reiterated as he advanced, with all the flurry of excited importance, and which the officers in command of the double line of musketeers took up and vociferously repeated—"dress up—shoulder your arms—keep the middle of the street clear—keep back the crowd"—which latter mandate had become the more necessary as the mob were now, in proportion as the interest of the exhibition increased, pressing more and more urgently and curiously forward. Then followed twenty-nine gentlemen, nobly mounted and richly dressed, also bareheaded, and cheering and waving their cocked hats before a coach and six horses (one of Tyrconnell's), in which was seated Fitz James, the younger brother of the Duke of Berwick—it is scarcely necessary to add, the illegitimate offspring of the king.

This equipage was closely succeeded by three officers of the guard, in their gorgeous uniforms, curbing their mettled steeds to a prancing walk, also bare-headed, and carrying their white-plumed cocked hats in their right hands. These were attended each by a led horse; next followed a body of mounted military officers of rank, among whom the crowd seemed particularly to distinguish two—the one a tall, athletic, dashing dragoon, with a bold, frank face, but withal commanding, prompt, and sagacious—and an easy and manly carriage—whose smile, as he returned the greeting of the multitude, with many a wave of his military hat, hovered between amusement and a prouder emotion—something of excited gratification and kindling triumph. The cries of "Sarsfield! Sarsfield!—more power to you!—Sarsfield for ever!—long life to you!" and soforth, the greater part thundered forth in the genuine fervour of the native Irish tongue, sufficiently indicated the individuality of the stalworth soldier. The other object of popular recognition presented a striking, and a very unfavourable contrast to the bold and handsome figure we have just described. This was a diminutive old hunchback, enveloped in a huge scarlet military cloak, which had obviously seen hard service. He bestrode a gigantic black horse, raw-boned and vicious; his features were sharp and shrewd, and red as a brick from hard weather and brandy, but the twinkle of his eye, spite of the sarcastic stamp of his other features, had in it a character of dry humour and jollity which qualified the grotesque acerbity of their expression—a fixed and cynical smile, half good-humoured, half derisive, exhibiting his only acknowledgment of the enthusiastic recognition with which the multitude greeted his appearance. The oddity of this deformed and singular figure was still further enhanced by a huge wig, in a state of the wildest dishevelment and neglect, straggling in tangled wisps about his sharp and elevated shoulders, and surmounted by a broad-leafed white hat and an enormous plume. This grotesque and neglected figure was no other than the celebrated veteran, Teigue O'Regan, then full seventy years of age, and who was destined, in the coming struggle, to outdo in skill, fortitude, and daring, all that he had heretofore achieved. Ere this could be written, however, the group in which they moved had passed on, and was succeeded closely by the five trumpets and kettle-drums of state in their liveries—after whom there moved some twenty of the gentlemen at large on horseback; next succeeded the messengers and pursuivants—then came the Ulster king-at-arms and the herald in all his gorgeous blazonry;—and now approached the object on whom the thoughts and hopes of so many thousands were centred—that being whose name had for so long acted like a talisman upon all Ireland—the exiled king—the champion and martyr of the ancient faith—the friend of the native people and their old aristocracy, covered with calamities, come among them to head his brave Irish army, and in the field of battle, to hazard one bold cast for his faith and fortunes, and their own. The cries of "The King! the King!" came faster and shriller, until, preceded by the full and stately form of the haughty Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell, bare-headed, and bearing the sword of state, as he rode singly in front, and flanked at either side, but a little in advance of them, by the Duke of Berwick and Lords Granard, Powis, and Melfort, there appeared, in a slouching hat and sooty-black peruke, in a plain suit of cinnamon-coloured cloth, with a george hung over his shoulder by a blue ribbon, the form of a man of strong and rather massive build, somewhat stricken in years, with a large face and heavy features, whose rigid and strongly-marked lines were impressed with a character of dignity, qualified, however, by something like the melancholy of discontent, which an occasional smile of gracious suavity relieved only for a moment. Dark-complexioned and haughty, the countenance was striking at once from its coarseness and inflexibility, and its stately and formal character was improved and confirmed by the sombre accompaniment of his huge coal-black peruke. Such, in aspect and equipment, did James advance, sitting his steed with more of formal adjustment and precision than elegance or grace; and as this figure, so strikingly contrasted in its extreme plainness of attire with the splendid forms which preceded and attended him, came slowly onward, returning with stately and gracious courtesy, from time to time, the enthusiastic greetings of his people, a burst of wild and tumultuous acclamation ran and rose around and before him, so stupendous, that air and earth rang with its vibrations. Fierce and wild was the rushing and crushing of the serried multitude; blessings, gratulations, welcomes, in English and in Irish, swelled in wild Babel-chorus; a tossing, tumbling sea of waving hats, and plumes, and handkerchiefs, and, answered at every window, and balcony, and housetop, with kindred enthusiasm, dazzled the eye with its giddy multitudinous whirl. Some wept, some laughed, in the thrilling excitement of that memorable scene; and, never since the island rose from the waves of the Atlantic, did its echoes ring with such a wild, passionate, and heartfelt burst of sympathy, devotion, and welcome, as thundered in that sustained and reiterated acclamation. Personal claims, individual intrigues, private schemes of advancement—all lesser feelings—were for the moment lost in the grand and paramount consciousness, that in the unpretending figure before them were centred interests so great, so stupendous, and so dear to them all;—their ancient grandeur, their old religion, their long hoped-for ascendancy, the movements and the power of mighty armies, the fortunes of kingdoms and people; the heart-stirring and awful consciousness of all these things filled that rapturous welcome with such an inspiring sublimity of enthusiasm, as Dublin will, in all probability, never see more.

Thus, burst after burst of welcome pealed after and before him, as he moved onward toward the Castle-gate, and a troop of the French guard, riding four abreast and close behind, soon screened the King from view. We need not wait for the long train which followed, including cavalcades of gentlemen and troops of buff-coated dragoons, with their broad-leafed hats and tossing plumes, and the line of noble-men's coaches, with six horses each, and the coach and four which bears Judge Keating in his scarlet and ermine, and all the other coaches and six, and cavalcades of gentlemen, and troops of soldiery, until at last there remained behind but the confused rabble-rout, who bring up the rear on foot, with wands, and streamers, and banners displayed, and cockades in their hats, shouting and huzzaing in rivalry with their motley brethren, who stand in dense array, and cheering from ten thousand throats at either side. Nor need we follow King James through all his progress to the castle-gate. There, as from Castle-street, the royal cavalcade wheeled upon the ancient drawbridge, under the shadow of the two grim flanking towers, a striking and a solemn pageant awaited his arrival. The Titular Primate crowned with a triple tiara, to represent the pope, and followed by the other prelates of his Church—*plenis pontificalibus*—in all the gorgeous and solemn array of the splendid ecclesiastical wardrobe of the ancient Church, stood marshalled to receive him. Before this impressive and magnificent spectacle, King James reined in his horse, dismounted, and reverently doffing his plain black hat, advanced across the drawbridge, threw himself upon his knees before the lordly impersonation of the see of Rome, and amid an absolute frenzy of acclamation from the now more than ever enraptured multitude, received the benediction of mother Church. Under such auspices, amid music, and acclamations, and blessings, and all the pageantry of splendid ecclesiastical and military and civil pomp, "suitable," as he himself says, "to the most solemn ceremony of the kind, and performed with the greatest order and decency imaginable," did James enter, for the first time, the precincts of the Irish capital.

While all this pageant was passing through the street with wild hubbub, Sir Hugh stood at the casement which commanded the scene, and from time to time pointed out to his daughter by his side, those whom he thought most worthy of remark, coupling the indication of each individual, with such suitable commentary as this:—

"See you that fellow in the crimson velvet and gold, a fellow with long light-coloured moustaches and eyebrows, a nose like a vulture's beak, and a small, sleepy, grey eye—that is one of the bloodiest miscreants among them. Look at him—mark him well—that is my Lord Galmoy. And there rides another wretch, as execrable in his own way; an intriguing, heartless, sensual ruffian—that bull-fronted, bloated gentleman in black—that is Thomas Talbot—the lay priest, as they call him; my Lord Tyrconnell's precious brother."

Thus the old knight pursued his commentaries, as the various personages, presented in succession, challenged his criticism. But poor Grace no longer heeded or heard him; her thoughts were wandering far away—fondly and unconsciously pursuing the cherished image of one whom her quick eye had instantly discerned, as for a moment he passed amid a crowd of others in the long procession. Need we say it was the form of Torlogh O'Brien which had lured her thoughts away, far into the fairy regions of romantic hope and fancy; and it was not until Sir Hugh, stamping vehemently upon the floor, exclaimed in the startling accents of surprise, anger, and alarm, "the scoundrel—what then has brought *him* hither?" that she was suddenly recalled to the present scene, and following the direction of her father's fiery gaze, she beheld the lank, athletic form of Miles Garrett, looking, it seemed to her, if possible, more ugly, sinister, and repulsive than ever, in the rich magnificence of his courtly attire, and riding slowly forward among a group of others.

"The villain has dogged me hither," he cried, in extreme agitation, "lest chance, or mercy should deliver me—dogged me, to insure my destruction—the malignant villain—I feel it—I know it—may God defend me. It needed no further craft, intrigue, or perjury, to aggravate my danger in this dire extremity. Villain—persevering malignant villain!"

The old man turned almost frantically from the window, walked to the far end of the room, and threw himself into a chair.

Startled at the extreme agitation and almost horror with which this apparition had filled the mind of the old man, his daughter fearfully and tenderly approached him, her own heart oppressed with dire misgivings, and throwing her arms around his neck, she covered his cheeks with her kisses.

* * * * *

Night now covered the ancient city of Dublin. Bonfires blazed at every corner; squibs bounced and rattled in mad horse-play among the shins of the multitude, and rockets soared gloriously aloft into the pitchy void; pipers played "the King enjoys his own again," and other loyal airs; the crowd lounged this way and that, in laughing noisy groups; from the windows, gleaming with lights, and chequered with flitting shadows, were heard the merry scraping of fiddlers, and pounding of dancing feet, along with all manner of jolly and uproarious sounds; the streets resounded with shouting, and buzz, and clatter: here the cheering, groans, and hooting of a mock procession, consigning, in effigy, the usurping Prince of Orange to the flames of a bonfire; there the drunken oratory of some tipsy royalist, mounted upon a cart, or haranguing from a tavern window, and sometimes too the angrier sounds of fierce disputation and quarrelling—these sounds, mingled with the occasional reverberating report of fireworks and the constant hum of music, filled all the town with such a buzz of excitement, as few but those whom weighty anxieties depressed, could listen to without a feeling of corresponding restlessness and hilarity.

It was upon this evening that old Jeremiah Tisdal sate morosely by the hearth of the public room of the great old inn which occupied the centre of "the Carbrie;" this chamber had once been the hall of the noble mansion which fortune, in her wayward caprices, had degraded to the vile and vulgar uses of a common hostelry; two mighty hearths at either end confronted one another gloriously, and sent their hospitable warmth through every nook of the vast old reeking chamber. The place was filled with noise and clatter enough of its own, and presented as motley a gathering of guests as ever yet a tavern chamber contained: some stood by the fire discussing the exciting events of the day, and the angry politics which agitated men's minds; others drank together, or played at backgammon, while listless loungers overlooked the game; some came in, while others went out, keeping up a constant double current of hospitable traffic. Here might be seen samples of many a strangely contrasted class; burly, comfortable citizens eagerly listening to the latest news of Londonderry and the Enniskilleners, retailed by some raw militia officer in all the conscious importance of his new blue uniform and brigadier wig, and seasoned with many a threat and thundering oath. In another place might be seen the boor who scarce could muster so much English as to call for his liquor and tobacco, swaggering along in the brand-new gaudy suit, to purchase which he had sold off his pigs and his cows, and come up to Dublin to seek his fortune in the character of a gentleman; and near him, perchance, with martial strut, and staring about with a bold gaze of curiosity, appeared one of the newly-arrived French troopers, affecting a sublime unconsciousness of the interest with which he was obviously observed; while in a dusky corner, two or three friars, in the peculiar habits of their orders, conversed in subdued but eager whispers over their homely supper.

Tisdal sate gloomily by the fire, smoking his pipe, and inly ruminating upon the events of the day—a contemplation by no means calculated to sweeten the natural moroseness of his temper, while he listened from time to time with growing impatience to the conversation which proceeded immediately beside him. While thus employed, he observed a pale young man, with a sweet, but melancholy countenance, and a pair of fiery dark eyes, gazing upon him with a degree of attention, under which he felt himself, spite of his phlegmatic temperament, singularly restless and uncomfortable. The form of the stranger was slight and graceful, and he was attired in a plain suit of black; he stood quite alone, and at a distance of some ten or twelve feet from the spot occupied by the puritan, so that his gaze was frequently interrupted by interposing groups. Once or twice Tisdal, returning his glance with angry impatience, succeeded in catching his eye, which, however, was instantaneously averted. Again, and again, this was repeated—and again, and again the puritan felt that he was still the object of the same vigilant and disconcerting observation. Once or twice he was on the point of going up to the pale gentleman in black and accosting him, but prudence told him that in such a place, and on such a night, a person of his faith and politics would best consult his safety by avoiding remark, and resisting every temptation to enter into discussion with strangers. Impressed with the obvious expediency of this latter course, the puritan availed himself of the first opportunity to withdraw himself unobserved to another part of the chamber. Gliding behind the crowded knots of guests who filled the room, he seated himself at a remote and unoccupied table at the furthest extremity of the large apartment; from this position, he looked in vain among the crowd, for the form which had caused him, in spite of himself, the uneasy and unpleasant feelings, inseparable from the idea of being watched. No longer under the eye of this unknown personage, he felt himself once more at ease, and smoked his pipe in calm and contemplative serenity, or something as nearly akin to it as his gloomy and unquiet temperament was capable of enjoying.

As his eye wandered listlessly among the crowd, his gaze was arrested by a face and form with which he was familiar; it was that of Miles Garrett, who had just entered the room in company with a square-built man in black, with a mantle of the same hue, folded in the Spanish fashion, the skirt being thrown over his shoulder, and muffling his face nearly to the eyes; he wore a black slouching hat, and making a signal to the host, he walked with him a little apart, and without removing the muffling from his face, spoke a few words in his ear: these appeared to be deferentially received, for the stout figure in black beckoned to Garrett, who instantly joined them, and preceded by the respectful innkeeper, they passed in silence through a room communicating with the private apartments of the hostlery. With the reader's permission, we shall follow them up a broad oak stair, along a gallery, through a sombre passage opening upon a large, bleak, old chamber, and through it into another; here the party stopped—the host placed the solitary candle which he carried, upon a table; its insufficient light illuminated the faded figures in the tapestry with an uncertain flicker, and left the recesses and corners of the chamber but half defined; the large hearth was fireless, and for aught appearing to the contrary, might have been so for half a century before—and the whole room partook of a character cheerless and spectral enough to have made a fanciful man feel rather queer: the two guests, however, who had just entered, did not appear to belong to this class; and in answer to their entertainer's deferential inquiry whether he should bring them a pair of candles, and have a fire lighted, the stranger in black peremptorily answered "*neither!*" and then, as he drew his gauntlet-shaped gloves from his hands, and tossed them upon the table, he added in a tone as summary—

"We must be private for a quarter of an hour; on no pretence disturb us; this pays you, and so begone!"

As he concluded, he laid a guinea upon the table with an emphatic pressure; the host pocketed the coin, bowed, and withdrew.

"Garrett!" he continued, as soon as the door had been closed for some seconds, "look out on the passage, and see that all is clear."

Miles Garrett obeyed the mandate in obsequious silence, and as he did so, the stranger threw his cloak upon a chair, and displayed the form of a powerfully built man, with square shoulders, short neck, and a face, upon whose swarthy breadth was impressed the stamp of masculine intellect and passion, with a certain character of sensuality besides, presenting on the whole such a countenance as irresistibly arrests the attention and impresses the memory; this was the very individual whom Sir Hugh had that day pointed out to his daughter as the "lay priest," and brother to the Earl of Tyrconnell, while the procession was passing beneath the windows of the Carbrie; let us add too, that this is the identical person whom we described in the earliest chapter of this book as leaning over a certain map, in company with Miles Garrett, upon a soft summer's night in the year 1686, in a rich saloon in London. On a very different night, thus three years later, have these two persons met—in a grim, old, dusty inn-chamber, in Dublin city. He sat down, and resting his elbows upon the table, leaned his chin upon his folded hands, while for a few moments he maintained a thoughtful silence.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONFERENCE—THE BACK-LANE—THE RING.

"WELL," said he at last, throwing himself back in his chair, and tapping his knuckles sharply upon the table, "begin, despatch."

Miles Garrett removed his hat as he took his seat opposite his companion, and with instinctive jealousy, glanced round the room, ere he commenced—

"You remember the property?" he inquired.

"Yes, proceed," answered Talbot.

"And—and the man?" hesitated Garrett.

"Yes, we have reason—go on," he replied.

"Well, then," resumed his companion, "he has run his neck fairly into the noose at last."

"How so?" asked Talbot.

"He is arrested under a warrant for high treason," replied the magistrate.

"Ay, indeed!" exclaimed Talbot, "come, this looks like business. Well, then, and what's your case, for I assume its of your making; can you prove it?"

"Ye–es, yes; I think we can," said Garrett, "a great deal of course will depend on the judge—and they have some troublesome witnesses."

"Who are they?" asked Talbot, quickly.

"One is a fellow named Tisdal—a dogged, ill-conditioned fellow, with honesty enough to spoil any body's schemes but his own," replied Garrett.

"A servant, or dependant?" inquired Talbot.

"No; unfortunately under no direct obligation to Sir Hugh—a sort of independent, humble, friend," answered he.

"Well, what can he prove?" persisted the other.

"You must understand, in the first place," replied Garrett, "that this is a case like Brown's, which, no doubt, you have heard of."

Talbot nodded, and his companion pursued.

"Sir Hugh fancies his house is to be attacked, and forms his friends into a sort of volunteer militia. A Mr. Hogan, with his servants, demands admission under a search-warrant, to look for some cattle he has lost. He is refused; the result is bloodshed—in short, a regular battle, and some dozens are slain; now this whig rascal, Tisdal, will give evidence, that Sir Hugh acted purely in self-defence; that the mob burned the witness's house, and nearly hanged himself, although he took no part in the defence of Sir Hugh's dwelling."

"And the other witness, who is he?" urged Talbot, impatiently.

"Colonel Torlogh O'Brien, who came up during the fray, dispersed the assailants, and afterwards shot one of the rapparees—(for, between ourselves, they were little better) that was taken close by," answered the magistrate.

"What kind of man is he?"

"A proud, impracticable, unmanageable fellow," replied Garrett

"Then its a bungled business—botched, that's all," said Talbot contemptuously, as he threw himself back in his chair, folded his arms, and looked with a coarse sneer in the face of his companion.

"Its a better crown case than Brown's indictment, as it stands," said Garrett, sturdily.

"Ay—that's the way you d——d Irish fellows, that live at the back of your bogs and mountains, prate of such matters," retorted Talbot, with coarse contempt. "Brown's case, indeed! why that has made noise enough, and too much, already. The king has a party in England as well as here, and he can't afford to lose them, that *you* may gain an estate."

A long silence followed, broken only by the impatient tapping of Talbot's foot upon the floor.

"What's his title? A grant from Cromwell—eh?" he inquired abruptly, after a pause of more than a minute.

"No, a grant from the old queen," replied Garrett, shaking his head gloomily.

"Then the act of settlement does not touch it—curs'd unlucky!" muttered Talbot, with the vehemence of disappointment. "He is summoned before the privy council," he resumed, after another brief pause.

"Yes; I delivered the summons myself," replied Garrett.

"And the warrant too?" continued Talbot.

"Yes, both at the same time," continued his companion.

"More bungling!—more botching!" said Talbot, bitterly.

"What good in having him before the council, with an indictment over his head—why he'll not cut his own throat. What in the devil's name can you hope to make of him? Bah! one of your cow-boys would have made a better job of it."

"Well, sir," said Garrett, drawing himself up indignantly, "am I to understand that you give the matter up? If so, speak out, and there's an end of it."

The "lay priest" remained silent and thoughtful; at length he arose and walked to the window, where he paused for a time, looking forth into the utter darkness with an aspect almost as black. Miles Garrett, doubtful of the effects of his sudden show of independence, watched his movements from the corner of his eye, with a covert glance of intense and absorbing interest, which became more uneasy in proportion as the silence was protracted, at length he said:—

"I don't know what your secret reasons for despairing of success may be, but looking at the case itself, and no further, I think there is, on the contrary, every cause for confidence. Sir Hugh Willoughby, like the rest of his religion, is, in heart, a rebel and nothing better, every body knows it, though few may have it in their power to prove it. A jury of loyal men will, therefore, be little disposed to let him ride off upon a legal crotchet, a loyal judge will be little disposed to——"

"Tut, tut, man, I know all that," interrupted Talbot, turning abruptly, and walking again to the table, at which Miles Garrett continued to sit; "a conviction, I dare say, may be had: the question is, will the king's advisers, for reasons of state policy, recommend the Crown to abandon this prosecution—that is the question."

"What are those papers beside you?" he resumed, abruptly, after a pause.

"Some notes, hastily thrown together," said Garrett, "which may help to guide those who shall examine him at council, as well as to determine whether this is not a case *demanding* a prosecution."

As he spoke, he handed the papers to his companion, who glanced through their contents, and, having occupied some minutes in this employment, he observed: —

"You have drawn this statement well enough; I'll take it with me."

"And—and you remember," said Garrett, hesitatingly.

He stopped, however, ere he concluded the sentence; and taking the candle, he looked jealously out upon the anti-chamber once more, then cautiously closing the door, he came back, seated himself, and leaning forward, so as to make himself distinctly heard without raising his voice above a whisper, he continued, with a shrewd and anxious look:—

"You remember, I presume, the *terms* on which we act together in this business?"

"Remember! yes, of course, distinctly. Why you don't suppose I have lost your undertaking, and the parchment? Of course I remember," replied Talbot, sternly.

"You also recollect," continued Garrett, averting his eyes, and speaking in the same cautious whisper, "the precise relation in which I happen to stand with regard to his Excellency, your brother, you remember the—the *peculiar* circumstances——"

"Yes, well," said Talbot, with contemptuous emphasis; and then he added, in a careless tone, "leave all that to me, Mr. Garrett, I know and remember all the circumstances well, and shall turn my knowledge to account, leave that to me."

"Where may I see you to-morrow?" asked Garrett.

"I shall make no appointment now, in the morning you shall hear from me, we have been but too long together in this place already. Rest content, I shall urge the matter this night; take the candle, if you please, and lead the way."

With this unceremonious direction, he pressed his broad-leafed hat again over his brows, re-adjusted his cloak as before, and followed his gaunt companion through the dreary succession of chambers and passages, which we have already traced in their company, and so in grim silence down the broad darksome staircase, with its ponderous balustrades of worm-eaten timber.

Jeremiah Tisdal meanwhile continued to smoke his pipe of tobacco in sour and solemn taciturnity, and a full hour elapsed ere he called for his reckoning, and prepared to depart. As the inn-keeper received the shot and assisted Tisdal to adjust his cloak, he addressed him in a cautious tone:—

"Sir," he said, "from your dress, I take it, you are from the north country, and if you be a Whig I counsel you to avoid the crowd before the door; if my guess be a right one, and that you know best, follow me and I will let you forth by a private way."

Tisdal gruffly nodded his assent to the proposal, and his host led the way through several chambers and corridors, and at last undid a rusty bar, opened a narrow door and pointing into the dark, drew back, and suffered Tisdal to pass forth. He did so, and in the dark stumbled down two steep steps, and found himself in a narrow lane, totally unlighted save by the dusky gleam from an occasional window high in the dark old walls. As Tisdal stumbled on, the innkeeper, stooping forward through the door, whistled shrilly, and then precipitately closed it again. This signal awakened the suspicions of the Puritan, but the grating sound of the rusty bolt returning to its socket, reminded him that he had now no course but to proceed.

"A pretty place to cut a Protestant throat in," muttered he, as he looked with a scowl into the impenetrable gloom, and then up into the dim glare of the distant casements, while at the same time he pressed down his hat and braced himself, in the instinctive anticipation of a coming struggle.

He was about to proceed when a chance light, gleaming through a lower window, illuminated a patch of the opposite wall, within a few yards of the spot where he then stood. In the full light of this sudden gleam he was a little startled to see a human form—it was that of the young, pale faced man in black, whose persevering scrutiny in the inn-room had some time since so much disconcerted him. He was standing near the wall, leaning upon a cane, and slightly inclined forward in the attitude of one who attentively listens.

"I would stake my life on it," muttered Tisdal, "that same lean fellow in black is watching for me. I don't know what to make of him —he does not look like a thief, nor altogether like a madman. I'll accost him, whatever he be;" and in pursuance of this resolution he exclaimed—" You're observed, sir, whatever be your purpose, if it be *honest* you will scarce refuse to lead the way out of this dark alley, and oblige a stranger who knows it not; but if otherwise," he added more sternly, and after a pause, observing that the figure seemed no otherwise affected by this address than in so far as he altered his attitude to one of perfect perpendicularity, and advanced a step or two toward the speaker—" if otherwise I warn you to think twice ere you run yourself into danger, I am prepared and resolved."

"I carry no weapon, sir, and mean you no hurt," replied the stranger, in a gentle tone. "I have expected you here for the better part of an hour."

"It was preconcerted then between you and the landlord that I should leave his house this way?" said Tisdal, with surprise, still qualified with suspicion.

"Yes," replied the other, calmly; "I wish to speak a few words with you, and cared not to be remarked; your name is Tisdal—Jeremiah Tisdal?"

"Well—and what then?" urged the master of Drumgunniol, with renewed surprise.

"I know the purpose of your visit to this city," pursued the young man, in the same gentle tone. "You have accompanied Sir Hugh Willoughby and his daughter."

"And if you know all about me, what need to question me?" said Tisdal, gruffly.

"I desire to know where Sir Hugh lodges—I ask no more than that you should convey me to his presence. It nearly concerns his safety that I should see him," replied the gentleman in black, with tranquil earnestness. As they thus spoke they were, side by side, slowly pursuing their way—the stranger a little in advance—through the dark and winding lane.

"You know Sir Hugh Willoughby?" asked Tisdal, sharply.

"No," answered the young man, quietly.

"Your request is then, to say the least of it, a strange one," observed the puritan. "What can I tell of you or your designs; you may mean well, or you may mean mischief; 'tis easier to work harm than good; and he that would escape the serpent's bite, now-a-days, must exercise the serpent's wisdom."

"You are suspicious—unreasonably suspicious, Mr. Tisdal," answered the young man, in a melancholy tone; yet I can scarcely blame you, nor have I any right to resent your injurious doubts. Bethink you, however, and say, were I an enemy of Sir Hugh's, and sought his ruin, could I not ascertain with ease, from other enemies, where he is now lodged. I need not seek this knowledge from his friends, least of all need I seek thus secretly a *private* interview. You wrong me, Mr. Tisdal."

"Well then, what *do* you purpose—what have you to disclose?" pursued the elder man.

"For my purpose," said his companion, "it is to place Sir Hugh upon his guard; for the disclosures I may make, you must pardon me when I say, they are for Sir Hugh Willoughby's ear, and for no other."

They had now nearly reached the end of the narrow lane, and the lights and the noise of the open street were close at hand, the young man stopped short, and said with gravity,—

"I have told you frankly my reason for wishing an interview with Sir Hugh Willoughby; you can conduct me if you will to his lodging; if you refuse to do so, the consequences be upon your own head. To-night my information may be important, to-morrow it may be too late. If you please to lead me to his presence now, I follow you—if not, we part here, and this minute."

Tisdal looked in the young man's face, for the light from the frequented and still busy street fell full upon him, as he stood, with one hand buried in his vest, and the other resting upon his silver-mounted cane, and in the expression of his features, as well as in his attitude, there was something at once tranquil and melancholy, which almost assured the Puritan that his original apprehensions were unfounded.

"Priest, madman, or astrologer," thought Tisdal, "he looks harmless, and even were he disposed for mischief, I see not what evil he can do."

"Follow me," he added, gruffly, as he turned abruptly in the direction of the Carbrie, and gliding cautiously along, so as to avoid observation or interruption, they soon found themselves within the door of that section of the old building, in which Sir Hugh and his fair daughter were now lodged.

The young man, in silence followed Tisdal up the stairs, and he having knocked at the door, led the way into the chamber. The old knight was sitting at the table, with a Bible open before him, and close beside him sate his beautiful child, with her hand locked in his.

"Ha, my trusty Tisdal," said he, while, for a moment, his countenance lightened with a smile, "and—and, gad's my life—a priest too," he added, with a changed look, and in a tone of surprise; for the young man in black had now uncovered his head, and as he bowed, the tonsure was plainly discernible.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," said the priest, turning his full dark eyes upon the old knight, "I have sought an interview with you, owing to some information touching your personal safety, which I this day accidentally learned; this interview must be private—quite private; and if you desire to know how it comes to pass, that I, a stranger, should feel, as I do, an interest in your fortunes, look at this ring—see in it a token of sincerity, and a plea for my excuse: for the sake of the person who gave me this, I have come here, and though a stranger, have presumed to intrude upon your privacy."

Sir Hugh turned deadly pale as he looked upon this token; his fingers trembled so violently, that he was fain to place it on the table again; he raised his hand slowly to his head, and twice essayed to speak, but in vain; so he but motioned to the young man to be seated, and rising hastily, left the room.

His daughter sate for a few moments glancing fearfully from Tisdal to the stranger, and from him to the old Puritan again; but at last, overcome with uneasiness for her father, she hurried after him, and reached his chamber door. She heard his voice in broken sentences from within, and his heavy and hurried tread, as with agitated step he crossed and re-crossed the room. She knocked, but her summons was unheard; she tried to open the door, but it was secured within; so she went down the stairs and waited upon the lobby for some minutes. On returning to knock once more at his door, she heard, she thought, the old man sobbing bitterly; but the sound speedily ceased, and he came forth, and kissing her fondly, he took her by the hand and descending the stairs in silence, he entered the chamber where Tisdal and the young priest stood.

"You will pardon me, sir," he said, addressing the young man in a subdued tone, "and it may be, you know enough to do so readily, when I tell you that some remembrances connected with that token, for a time unmanned me. I am now composed and prepared to hear you. You desire to be private; we can be so in the next room. Will you accompany me?"

The priest bowed gravely, and followed Sir Hugh, who, when they had entered the chamber, closed the door, and placing the candle upon the table, after an agitated pause, and in a voice so broken as to be scarcely audible, he asked—"Is she well, sir; is she happy; does she need help?"

"The lady whose this token was, stands not in need of any aid; she is, I trust, well," answered the young man; "and for happiness, I believe her chief hopes are fixed in futurity."

"I will not ask where she is," said Sir Hugh, hurriedly; "I suppose the question were vain."

"Vain, indeed, sir—I may not answer it—my promise has been given," answered the young man.

"Well, sir, proceed we to the purpose of your visit," said the old knight, with a heavy sigh, and after a long pause.

"I have come, sir, it is right to say, with no message or intimation from *her*, the lady of whom we have spoken," said the stranger; "but simply, to carry to you a caution, grounded upon information, of which mere accident this day put me in possession. You are prosecuted for high treason. Know you the *motives* of that prosecution?"

"The motives—why, faction, I should say; with, perhaps, some leaven of personal malice," replied Sir Hugh.

"There may be, for aught I know, something of those mixed up in it," answered his visiter; "but the true and sustaining motive, the purpose and object of the whole proceeding is the possession of your property; it matters not for whom, your *property* is the real aim of this indictment—this knowledge may help to guide you hereafter. The other matter is of more immediate concernment. You are to be examined before the privy council, within a few days at furthest."

"True, sir, what then?" replied he.

"No pains will be spared to entrap you into perilous admissions; and, mark me well, your words will be written down by a clerk in the adjoining room, and if they can serve against you, will be brought in evidence upon your trial—so, once for all, be upon your guard. You now comprehend the motives which originated this prosecution. If you be innocent, fear not—avarice may be bribed."

"But not by me. I will hold no terms with it," said the old man, vehemently. "I stand on my innocency and on my rights; and whoever they be, who would reach at any possessions through my life—I care not how great or how many—I defy them all. I have done no wrong—I have done my duty—I have guarded my house, and my family, and my child's life, as the laws of man, and God, and nature allow me; and if for this the king will take my life, let him have it—the innocent blood needs no ransom. They may make a traitor and a corpse of me, but I will hold no compromise with villainy."

The young man's kindling eye told plainly how his own nature sympathised with the words of the old knight; but he shook his head sadly, and taking his hat, he added—

"Do nothing hastily, sir; consider every act, weigh every word; for, be your cause what it may, you will need the coolest caution, the calmest judgment, as well as the promptest energy, and the keenest sagacity to boot, if you would baffle or escape the schemes of that cabal."

These were the concluding words of the young man; and, as he spoke them, he passed slowly forth. He paused, however, in the outer room, and added—

"I am attached, as assistant almoner, to a regiment of horse, whose head quarters are at present in your house of Glindarragh. My duty will take me there in a few days. Should you desire any message thither, you may trust its safety to my charge. I shall see you ere I depart."

Thus speaking, he bowed lowly and gravely to the young lady, and then to the knight, and so withdrew.

"Alas! alas!" said the young man, bitterly and sadly within himself, as he once more found himself alone, and in the chill night air—"alas! for the country in whose name such deeds are done, such passions cherished. Woe's me for the truth, when the children of darkness are foremost in her cause!—woe's me for the Church, when her banners are unfurled by secular ambition and rapacity, and her rights and her interests but a cover and pretence for selfish schemes and private spoliation. Was ever country so loyal to her faith and king, so full of virtues, so schooled in afflictions, so willing to suffer and to bleed!—were ever poor people filled with holier devotion and loftier enthusiasm, if their leaders would but guide them on with singleness of purpose, and show them honestly what they ought to do! But, alas, instead of wisdom and virtue, I see but craft and avarice, violence and chicane—with scandal and weakness, and, alas! I fear me, with disaster and ruin behind."

The priest now turned up a narrow and deserted street, and, walking at a brisker pace, after two or three turns, he came into a kind of dreary opening, which extended from the termination of the street which he had now reached, into the scattered suburbs. The only object discernible against the deep blue starlit sky was the outline of a large house with a steep gable, and surrounded by several tall, desolate-looking trees. A garden of some extent, filled with straggling bushes, drearily occupied the side of this mansion. Into this enclosure, the young man admitted himself by a latch-key; and as he approached the narrow portal which opened from the house into the garden, his ear was attracted by the snorting and champing of a horse close by. On looking through the paling, he perceived, with tolerable distinctness, a carriage and horses drawn under the front of the old house, and opposite to the hall-door. For many reasons this disposition struck him as a strange and somewhat unaccountable one.

"God grant that the poor lady may not have been disturbed," he exclaimed, uneasily, as he raised his eyes upward to a window upon the first floor, through whose red curtains a light was duskily visible.

At this moment the light was suddenly moved, and a shadow passed between him and the curtain. At the same time he heard two voices raised in strong excitement. The one was that of a man who seemed to be reiterating some command with growing sternness—the other were the accents of a female, pleading, as it seemed, with him, and that under the urgency of fear and anguish, and something of indignation, too. In the midst of this, the casement was on a sudden pushed open, but it was as instantly shut again with violence, and the vehement debate continued as before.

At the same moment a window in the front of the house was thrown open, and a female voice, in loud accents of alarm, called shrilly for the watch.

Not knowing what to think or fear, the young man stumbled and scrambled through bushes and over earth mounds, in the dark—speeding through the old garden with all the haste his limbs could command.

To turn the key, spring into the dark house, along the passage, and up the staircase—every moment hearing the angry debate of human voices rise louder and more distinct upon his excited ear—was but the work of a moment. Without hesitating for a second, either for preparation or ceremony, the young priest pushed open the door, and entered the chamber.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FAMILIAR—THE CASTLE—AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW COAT.

Two figures occupied the room—one was the pale, wasted, and melancholy form of the lady whom we have already seen in the antique chamber in the castle of Lisnamoe—the same, too, we may as well observe in passing, whose presence supplied the only female figure who, muffled and weeping, appeared in the saloon in London, to which, in our first chapter, we introduced the reader.

She stood with her hands raised and clasped together in anguish—one foot advanced, as if she had but just stamped it upon the floor in passion; her face, however, spite of her excitement, showed no hue of life through its transparent whiteness, but her dark eyes streamed fire upon the tall, athletic, malignant form before her—it was that of Miles Garrett.

As the door opened, each glanced to see what its revolution might disclose.

"Ha, O'Gara!" exclaimed Garrett, with bitter emphasis the moment he beheld him; "then *you* are the mover of all this precious mischief."

"I understand you not, sir," replied the young man, with dignity; "I've taken no part in any mischief—I have done no wrong—and if I can prevent it, shall permit none," he added, glancing at the melancholy wreck of pride and beauty, who now sank (the momentary strength of terror and anger fled), pale, helpless, and deathlike, into a chair.

"I will not go—I will not go," she muttered, fearfully glancing from the young priest to Garrett; "do not let him force me away—I will not go."

"Look you," said Garrett, striking the table with his clenched fist; "no more debate—walk by my side down stairs, or I'll lift you to the coach in my arms."

"Sir, Mr. Garrett——" said the ecclesiastic, earnestly.

"Silence! meddling, fanatic idiot," cried Garrett, forgetting his habitual self-command, and stamping furiously on the floor.

"Oh, save me, good sir," said the lady, rising again, and tottering backward.

"You shall *not* touch this unhappy lady, sir; by —— you shall not;" said the priest, his generous indignation overcoming every other feeling.

"Out of my way—ungrateful dog!" cried Garrett, with concentrated ire—"out of my way, or your black weeds and Spanish diploma shall not protect you."

"I will not leave this spot," answered the young man, firmly; "I interpose myself—my life—between this unprotected lady and your violence; unarmed as I am, you shall find me resolute—I will not give way; I entreat, I implore of you, think well what it is you do."

"I tell thee, blockhead, thou knowest nothing of this matter," said Garrett, through his set teeth; "this lady is my charge—for her safety *I* am responsible; thy audacious intrusion I will not tolerate; be advised—be warned."

"Miles Garrett," cried the lady, in extreme agitation; "you have, and *can* have, no authority over me."

"We'll see that," retorted Garrett, with an epithet too coarsely insulting for these pages.

"Stand back, sir," said the priest, in a tone of stern and fearless reproach; "how can you break a bruised reed? in the name of manhood I charge you again—stand back."

"I tell you what, young sir," said Garrett, with a sudden accession of calmness, more deadly and ominous far than his preceding excitement had been; "I desire no violence—but if you persist in your knight errantry, you may chance to rue it. Leave me and this lady to settle our own affairs, and depart from the house as you came into it."

"I will leave the room at this lady's bidding, and at no other," said the young man, firmly, still interposing calmly between Garrett and the feeble object of his peremptory visit.

As the slight form of the priest confronted the gaunt and powerful figure of the intruder, it were hard to conceive a contrast more striking and affecting. Garrett stood blazing in the finery of his rich gala suit—his full wig resting on his shoulder in a black cloud of horse hair, itself as well as his lace, and all his rich attire, disordered by the hurry and violence of his gestures—while his marked and swarthy features scowled with the blackest storm of gathering fury, upon the pale, bright-eyed young man, who, with a calm look, half of defiance, half of reproach, serenely fearless, stood in the composed attitude of peace, one hand thrown a little back, as if to check the advance of the lady whom he sought to defend, the other resting upon his silver-headed cane—and the paleness of his noble features, and the tranquil dignity of his attitude, alike relieved and enhanced by the sable dye and simple fashion of his not ungraceful dress.

The young priest had hardly uttered the sentence we have last written, when Garrett, with a muttered curse or a threat, doubling his huge fist, strode towards him. At the same moment, however, the chamber door, which was nearly closed, was pushed partly open, and a mean looking, prying countenance, grinning and puckered, and apparently belonging to a person who had passed the meridian of his days, peered sharply and inquisitively, with a pair of small, glittering eyes, into the apartment.

"Hey-day, Mr. Garrett, stay your hand, sir—pray, do, Mr. Garrett," cried the apparition in a squeaking voice, and with a good deal of energy.

"Well, what now? come in—come in, rascal," replied Garrett, half impatiently and half irresolutely, as he turned quickly toward the speaker. Edgeways, and with a look of cringing complacency which contrasted odiously with the fierce and diabolic passions which he well knew had but just startled the echoes of the old house, the stranger entered; he was meanly dressed, and in his sycophantic smile there was a lurking villainy which combined to render his appearance indefinably formidable as well as repulsive, he bowed round with a low and servile inclination,

"What do you want—in the devil's name, what is it?" pursued Garrett.

"I crave your pardon, Mr. Garrett, and *your's*, madam," he replied, again bowing humbly; "but having come hither upon this business, and in the same carriage, I thought I might be excused if I came up stairs, and just hinted that this discussion has been carried on in so high a tone, that what with the noise of the dispute, and the old woman in the attic calling for the watch, if I had not known that this was a mere visit, as I may say, of friendly persuasion, I should myself have almost believed I overheard a riot."

The old man placed his emphasis so pointedly, that were it not for his cringing smile and attitude, and his humble tone, this speech must have been construed as a piece of mere impertinence ; as it was, Garrett did not seem clearly to know in what way to take it ; he felt, perhaps, that the rebuke which it conveyed, had come seasonably : he therefore paused, a good deal disconcerted.

" Since the lady prefers the society of her new *protector*," continued the stranger, with a covert sneer as he glanced at the young ecclesiastic, " surely, Mr. Garrett, you need not fret yourself if that preference leads her into new difficulties, and perhaps disgraces—all of her own making. You have acquitted yourself, Mr. Garrett—*you* wash your hands of the whole business—once and for ever; you have done your duty, and need trouble yourself no further."

Garrett glanced darkly and irresolutely once or twice in the face of the speaker, and the little ill-favoured man returned his glance with one silent look of such diabolic rebuke as Mephistophiles himself might have shot at his rash familiar.

" My friend and patron, Mr. Garrett," he continued in the same humble tone, and with the same sweet smile, " is a little hasty—a little rough. I regret your determination ; but as you decline returning to the security of his roof, he can of course do no more than wish you as much tranquillity and safety, and respectability elsewhere ; good night, madam, we take our leave."

So saying, the little gentleman put his arm through Garrett's, and infinitely to the amazement of the other two occupants of the chamber, led him unresisting and in silence from the chamber, and so down the stairs.

" Thank God, thank God!" said the poor lady, clasping her thin hands fervently together as she raised her eyes to heaven in an agony of gratitude, " Oh God, be thanked," and she burst into an hysterical paroxysm of weeping.

" Come what may," she said at last, when the violence of her passionate agitation had subsided, " I shall never know the bitterness and humiliation of crossing his threshold and sheltering under his roof-tree more. Oh, merciful God! that I should ever have owed protection to the persecutor, the murderous persecutor of poor—poor, wronged ——" She buried her face in her hands and sobbed and trembled so violently, that the young man became almost alarmed for her.

" Had you not come in when you did," she resumed with a shudder, " I do believe he would have murdered me ; he looked as if he could—well, well, my life they may take ; would—would it were ended, and so all over ; but I will not yield in this—I will not eat the bread of his betrayer—no threats, no cajolery shall prevail. I will not go back—another home they may find me, but *there* I will not go."

Meanwhile Garrett and his companion, inclosed in the old-fashioned coach, were driven rapidly along the streets; for some minutes the silence was unbroken except by the rumble of the wheels. The shabby-looking personage, however, at last remarked, "What a virago, that is—mere skin and bone, but animated with the soul of a tigress; you took a wrong course with her, believe me; the only way with such subjects, is to wheedle and coax; as to resorting to brute force—doing mischief and ultimately failing, as you might—why, it were worse than frenzy; besides the object is not really worth the risk. You apprehend, believe me, too much from her newly-asserted independence."

"I do not agree with you; it's a bad business—cursed bad," said Garrett sulkily; "but you're right in saying that force would not do, after that officious dog of a priest came in. I do not know what to say of it."

"Nobody knows but yourself that she's here?" inquired his companion.

"No; and do you keep your counsel—not a word of it to any one breathing; do you mark me?" said Garrett, impressing the caution with two or three lazy but emphatic kicks.

"Trust *me*, Mr. Garrett, confidence is confidence, sir, with *me*," said the sinister-looking personage from the corner of the coach, where he lay coiled up like a reptile in the darkness.

"I tell you," said Garrett, suddenly, after another sulky pause, "I don't like it—it's a bad business; if she makes herself troublesome to certain persons just now, she will *ruin* my schemes for me; curse her, she's here of course, about the old blustering knight's affair, though what can she do to help him! I don't like it, however, that't all—the very people whom she ought not to meet, are now in town, and here she comes, as if the devil inspired her with the precise and only freak she could contrive, to pester and baulk me. I can't afford to lose one particle of my interest at court at this moment; if I do, all my pains go for nothing; curse the woman! curse her; look ye, Garvey, you must find some way to keep her quiet—dispose of her somehow; *any* how, so you prevent her meddling—prevent her shewing herself—that's all I want."

A silence ensued, which was broken by Mr. Garvey's bursting into a short laugh.

"A deuced comical plan crossed my mind, and not a bad one either; one that will bring the old lady to reason, Mr. Garrett," said he; "and keep her as close as if the grand inquisitor had her four bones under lock and key."

"I don't want to know any thing about it," said Garrett, hastily; and then added, gruffly; "but remember the occasion may arise *suddenly*, and—and you need not be over-scrupulous when it does come; but here we are again."

The coach stopped, and they proceeded to descend.

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A few days after the events recorded in our last chapter, somewhere about the hour of noon, a coach, surrounded by a guard of dragoons, rumbled over the drawbridge, and under the ancient archway, which then, between two grim and dusky towers—massive, sombre, and prison-like, and under cover of two heavy cannon, upon a platform within—gave admission to the castle of Dublin. The castle of those days bore small resemblance to the present structure. A suspicious-looking, dingy, ominous building—sternly impressed in every aspect with the double character of a fortress and a gaol—swarming with lounging soldiery—and with every pass, and almost every doorway guarded by a musketeer; old brass cannons, of marvellous length, peered grimly from the time-worn embrasures of the outer walls; and the buildings, whose narrow and unequal gables crowded up the intervals between the towers, formed a spacious quadrangle, whose irregularity and gloom, coupled with the sounds of military occupation—the echoing tread of the sentinels, and the challenging of those who passed—and the marching and counter-marching of the files of soldiery, at stated times, relieving guard; all impressed the mind of the man who, leaving the busy streets, plunged on a sudden within its solemn precincts, with something at once of gloom and excitement—how much more the mind of him who passed beneath its formidable shadows, as a prisoner of state.

While this vehicle made its way onward, several carriages and four, having deposited their living burdens of rank, arrogance, guile, or wisdom, as the case might be, at the entrance to the council chamber, were moving slowly away—and two or three mounted lackeys were walking their masters' horses slowly up and down, before the listless groups who lounged and gossipped there. The coach drew up at a little distance from this door, and Sir Hugh Willoughby, followed by old Jeremiah Tisdal, descended to the pavement; and Torlogh O'Brien dismounting, whispered a word or two in his ear, and then led the way briskly toward the narrow arched doorway, which admitted to the interior of the building, in which lay the chamber where King James's privy council were then assembled.

As Sir Hugh was about to pass through the crowd of applicants and expectants who haunted the outer door, Thomas Talbot stood within the shadow of the archway. He caught Sir Hugh's eye as he passed, and a slight and stern interchange of recognition partially revealed the feelings with which each regarded the other. But the old knight engaged his eye but for a moment;—a little incident, which might easily have escaped another, attracted and riveted his attention. Tisdal was following Sir Hugh at a brief interval, and as the burly puritan made his way through the crowd which beset the entrance, some one tapped him sharply on the shoulder; he looked round, and encountered the steady and sneering gaze of the musketeer, who kept guard at the door. Could he believe his eyes!—there, in the bright scarlet uniform and bandoleer, with shouldered musket, and broad-leafed low-crowned military hat, stood with a suppressed grin of triumph stamped upon his unsightly visage, the identical Richard Deverill, whose body he at that moment believed to be mingling in the ashes of the ruined Grange of Drumgunniol. Without deranging his stiff military attitude, Deverill kept his eye with a steady significance, which he enhanced by one or two arch winks, and a low titter of suppressed delight, full upon his confounded and horror-stricken acquaintance. Tisdal returned his pleasant glance of recognition with a stare of such obvious agitation and dismay, that it was impossible to witness the intensity of fear and amazement which it pourtrayed—an expression so powerfully contrasted with the dogged and masculine character of his features—without a sensation at once of curiosity and suspicion. Tisdal stepped, or rather staggered back a pace or two, with mouth agape, and a scowl of horror—but mastering his emotion, with a strong effort, he recovered his self-possession; he glanced quickly round him, to see if he had been observed, and darting another hurried look at the object of his fear, he hastened into the building, and followed Sir Hugh up the stairs. This recognition, and its agitating effect upon Tisdal, occupied little more time than would have sufficed to receive a blow and to stagger a step or two under its impulse; but though no other eye observed it, the keen glance of Talbot, who as we have said, had paused for a moment in the shadow of the entrance, instantly noted the occurrence. It might mean nothing—but it might be important—so without a moment's delay, this crafty and energetic man, inwardly resolving to turn the incident, if possible, to account, took his own decisive measures, thereupon.

Meanwhile, Sir Hugh mounted the broad staircase, and passing a crowded lobby, entered the apartment, where he was to await the pleasure of his majesty, King James, then sitting in council in the adjoining chamber. The feelings of suspense and excited expectation—the consciousness that he was about to encounter, in a few moments, those public men, whom, upon earth, he most dreaded and hated—the feeling that he was about to stand, for the first time, under the eye of royal suspicion and displeasure, that he was momentarily approaching a scene which must prove one of the most memorable and momentous of his existence—all these reflections and emotions combined to depress, excite, and agitate him to a degree that was absolutely painful. Thus he awaited with breathless anxiety and suspense the summons which should call him through the crowded ante-chamber into the royal presence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

Sir Hugh had not very long to wait in the antechamber; many groups were there assembled, some with memorials, and other matters officially to be submitted; others, and the greater number, lounging there, in the hope of having a few minutes' conference with one or other of the privy council, as they withdrew; intent on urging some private suit, for place or pension, and most of them engaged in animated conversation—some of it conducted in genuine Irish, then almost universally understood and spoken by the country gentlemen—and all, it is scarcely necessary to add, of a very decidedly one-sided character, as respected the momentous politics of the day. Sir Hugh, silently, and ill at ease, awaited in suspense the summons which was to call him into the presence of King James. At last, a door in the far end of the chamber, opened, and a clerk looked in and drew back again—then the same door was re-opened, and the same official entered, and twice called Sir Hugh Willoughby by name. Through the now silent and staring crowd, the old knight passed; the guard who accompanied him and Tisdal were stopped at the door, and he passed alone into the council chamber.

It was a spacious wainscoted chamber, lighted not very cheerfully, by three narrow windows, cased in deep recesses in the side wall, and overlooking the interior quadrangle of the castle. At a long table sate some dozen of the right honourable the privy council of those days, in rich suits, velvets, and laced cloths; and presenting (even were its effect unaided by the consciousness that the whole power, dignity, and enterprise of the loyalist cause were there assembled), a *coup dœil,* whose very richness, splendour, and solemnity would have made it impressive.

At the head of the table he had no difficulty in recognizing, at a single glance, King James himself, dressed, as on the day of his entrance into Dublin, with a plainness which contrasted strikingly enough with the almost gorgeous attire of those around him. Pens, ink, and some papers lay before him; and at the moment when the old knight entered, the king was addressing a dark-featured, intelligent gentleman, with animated eyes, gravely but richly dressed in a suit of velvet, who sate close by him. This personage was the Count D'Avaux, the ambassador, and not now for the first time, of the *grand monarque.* The remark had been a gracious one, and obviously intended, at least, for a pleasantry; for a formal smile was upon the face of majesty, as he concluded ; and the Count D'Avaux shrugged and laughed, in which latter loyal tribute, the rest of the council dutifully joined.

As the king's eye rested upon Sir Hugh, the passing smile vanished, and his rigid and heavy features recovered in an instant their usual haughty and saturnine expression—with a formal and lofty carriage, and a bold, and, it must be added, a somewhat ungracious stare, the king, for some seconds, looked full upon the old knight.

"Whom have we here, Tyrconnel?" inquired James, gravely, turning to the Irish favourite, without a change in a single feature of his rigid face.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby, my liege," answered Tyrconnel, bowing toward the king, and speaking in a low tone—"your majesty will remember—"

"Willoughby!—I remember," said James—whose accurate memory and pains-taking habits made him at all events a good man of business—"I remember—Willoughby—let me see—I have a note of this matter by me—so—we have it"—and as he thus spoke, the king turned over the leaves of a gilt red leather note-book—"a prisoner under a warrant of high treason—a gentleman of Limerick, in Munster."

"The same, my liege," answered Tyrconnel.

"You are Sir Hugh Willoughby?" continued the king, turning again toward the prisoner, with the same fixed and somewhat forbidding aspect.

"I am, may it please your majesty, but no traitor;" replied Sir Hugh, firmly but respectfully.

"Your house of Glindarragh," continued the king, coldly, again referring to his notes and pursuing his interrogatories, for he delighted in conducting an examination in person, and sometimes indulged this taste to an extent scarcely reconcileable with the dignity of his royal station—"your house of Glindarragh is situated in the southern district of this our kingdom of Ireland, in the county, I think, of Limerick?"

"Even so, my liege," replied the knight.

"We desire, then, to know," continued the king, "from your own experience, which must needs be considerable, *how* you believe our Protestant subjects of that district to be affected toward our rights and person?—Speak out, sir"—he continued, sternly—"you will find more safety in plain dealing than equivocation, when you come thus face to face with the King—how do they stand affected, sir—it's a plain question?"

"May it please your majesty, they are one and all peaceably dis posed," replied Sir Hugh, after a moment's hesitation, for the peremptory tone of the king had a little disconcerted him.

"Scarce *peaceably*, methinks," rejoined the king, austerely, "if what is in evidence against yourself, and some three score others of your friends, be no perjury."

Tyrconnel smiled contemptuously on old Sir Hugh, as James uttered this ominous sarcasm.

"If there be any matter sworn against me, my liege," answered Sir Hugh spiritedly—"save that where your majesty's government had not the power to protect my life and interests, I feared not to defend them for myself—that evidence of which your majesty has spoken—*is* perjury, and nothing better."

James could ill brook, except when it came from a favourite, even the semblance of contradiction, though he not unfrequently provoked it; and the fearless speech of the old knight savoured much too strongly of whiggish independence, not to offend an intolerance of opposition so sensitive and exacting as that of the last king of the Stuarts. A glow of irritation flushed his massive features. He sate more erect as he eyed the unceremonious prisoner with a look of extreme displeasure, and with a slight and haughty gesture adjusted the folds of his laced cravat, and the sable curls of his peruke; it manifestly required an effort of the royal dignity to swallow down the angry and peremptory rebuke which had risen to his lips; he did, however, suppress the unseemly ebullition, and after a brief pause, he observed :—

"You are somewhat blunt, Sir Knight—somewhat blunt, methinks, but we except not against your plain speaking, provided you but deal as plainly in your answers, as you have done in your commentary. I desire to know how far we may calculate upon the loyalty and duty of our Protestant subjects in Munster. Take the question thus—were our service to need their active assistance, do you think the Protestant gentlemen of your acquaintance would accept commissions in our army or militia?"

"For myself, my liege," replied Sir Hugh, "I have not been bred a soldier; and my years, moreover, unfit me for a soldier's life; had I a choice, therefore, I frankly allow I should decline a commission in either service; and as regards the gentlemen of my acquaintance, I have never spoken to them of such a matter, and cannot, therefore, presume to say how they might act in such a case."

"Bravo, old gentleman—well said, and guardedly!" muttered one of those who sate by, as with one hand buried to the wrist in the folds of his rich laced vest, and the other grasping as firmly as he might have done his holster pistol, the elbow of the great chair in which he sate—he looked with a keen, bold countenance, on which flitted the faintest smile of admiration, toward the stout old prisoner; this was one among the last made, and will prove, perhaps, one the last forgotten of King James's privy councillors—Colonel Sarsfield—not yet Lord Lucan.

"You see how it is," said James, addressing the French ambassador in the language of that court, which was, at least, as easy to him as his own, "heresy and disaffection go hand in hand; by my royal faith," he added, with vivacity, "I have not a Protestant subject on whom I dare rely."

The king paused, and the Frenchman observed with a calm smile—"my royal master of France makes light of such difficulties, he converts one half with a dragonade, and mans his galleys with the rest."

"My good friend," said James, peevishly, "your master is a king; as for me, *par ma foi!* my subjects have taken to ruling me so effectually, that I am but too much obliged to them if they let me say my prayers my own way."

"I would suggest," began the count in reply.

"Count D'Avaux," interposed Tyrconnel, with a jealousy which he could not repress, but at the same time with a haughty affectation of deference, "as one of his majesty's privy council, and with his royal permission, I must remind you that you are here on sufferance, and not as an adviser."

"By your leave, my Lord Tyrconnel," rejoined the ambassador, with provoking coolness; "I represent, here, the majesty of France—the power which has supplied your empty magazines, filled your garrisons, replenished your treasury, and, under the safeguard of the *fleur-de-lis*, from the deckage of a French navy, and amidst the battalions of a French army, landed your royal *master* (and he laid a galling emphasis on the word), upon the shores of Ireland; I have the exalted honour to represent King Louis—the monarchy of France, in this assembly; and I have yet to learn that France appears in your Irish councils on sufferance."

"Your excellency seems to have forgotten," exclaimed Sarsfield, sarcastically, for he shared in the national and personal jealousy with which the obvious prevalence of French councils in the *cabinet interieur* had inspired the Irish adherents of the royal cause, "that the flower of our Irish army is serving your master in France; and for the supplies he is pleased to send—what are they but a loan, and a prudent one to boot? Pshaw! Count d'Avaux," he continued, more gruffly, "we all know as well as you do that France serves but her own ends in throwing some men and money into this country. It is childish—all this rhetoric—vapour, fustian."

"Colonel Sarsfield, you have said enough," exclaimed d'Avaux, calmly, but with a heightened colour, and at the same time preparing to rise; "such language, scarce seemly from one gentleman to another, when offered to the Majesty of France——."

"Count D'Avaux, my good friend, for my sake," cried James, excitedly, laying his hand upon the ambassador's arm—"Colonel Sarsfield, we have had enough, and over much, of these vain altercations; let them be ended. My Lord Tyrconnel, I look to you to keep our hot Irish bloods from boiling over. This is, beside," he added, more severely, and glancing at Sir Hugh, whose presence had been forgotten for the moment, "scarce prudent or politic, or seemly. My lords and gentlemen of the privy council, our time is scarce enough for business; it shall not be wasted in distractions. Nay, D'Avaux, I entreat—Colonel Sarsfield, I command," he continued, raising his voice as the two personages indicated, successively attempted to speak. "Messieurs, there must be an end of this; while I preside here I will be obeyed. *Ma foi!* gentlemen, am I King here, or not? Tyrconnel, Riverston, second our endeavours, I pray you in this matter."

"Your Majesty's command is enough for me," said Sarsfield, with an angry glance at D'Avaux, followed, however, by a profound and graceful inclination to the King, whose extreme distress had, perhaps, wrought upon him more effectually even than his manifest displeasure.

"We are so persuaded, Colonel Sarsfield," said James quickly; and then he added, with a sigh, which seemed to rise from the very depths of his heart, and with a slight knitting of the brows, as if in pain, "God knows—God knows we are troubled and perplexed over much already by the outrages and the wiles of open and of secret enemies; let us be at peace with one another. We are friends; I beseech you, as friends, be at peace one with another."

The king spoke in such a tone of extreme distress and earnest entreaty, that an embarrassed silence of some seconds followed—a pause of which it were hard to say whether it partook most of the solemn or the ridiculous. Tyrconnel, however, interrupted this awkward silence.

"May it please your Majesty to permit me to put a few questions to Sir Hugh Willoughby," he asked, "before his attendance is dispensed with?"

"Surely, surely; but be brief—be brief; we have wasted time enough, and over much, already," rejoined the king, a little peevishly; and taking a pen, he began to jot down some notes with a careful hand in a small blank book, in which were entered the materials of those journals which he kept with such persevering amplitude and punctuality.

"It may be, my Lord Chief Justice Riverston," said Tyrconnel, as if suddenly recollecting a circumstance which had escaped him, and with a gracious smile—"it may be that you had best, with his majesty's permission, withdraw for a few moments from the council; as *you* shall try this case hereafter, it were but fair play in us to guard the prisoner against prejudicing himself by too much freedom in your presence."

"Do not withdraw on my account, my lord," said Sir Hugh, sternly and quickly; I will take sufficient care *not* to prejudice myself. I thank you for your merciful anxiety, my Lord Tyrconnel; but it is altogether causeless."

Tyrconnel was evidently not prepared for this, for a faint cloud of displeasure and disappointment darkened the haughty face of the practised dissembler.

"Be it as you will, then," he said; "only be cautious—say no more than is simply necessary."

Sir Hugh turned impatiently away, and Tyrconnel continued: "We have heard something against the character and credibility of this Mr. Hogan, your chief accuser. You represent his visit to your house to have been a mere pretence, to gain an entrance for lawless violence. I have heard matter which would give a colouring to this. It has been suggested to me that he presented you with a forged warrant of search, on the night of the affray. Did you read the name signed at the foot of it?"

"I care not to answer that question, my lord," said Sir Hugh, calmly, but decisively.

"You are asked," said the king, laying down his pen, and looking upon the contumacious prisoner with an expression of imperious surprise—"you are asked whether you read the signature at the foot of the warrant. The Earl of Tyrconnel awaits your answer."

"May it please your majesty," said Sir Hugh, respectfully but perfectly firmly, "I have already declined to answer my Lord Tyrconnel's question."

"You will answer the King, then," said James, peremptorily; "*we* now ask you that question, and expect an answer."

"My liege," said Sir Hugh, "the question touches matters affecting my life. For this reason it was, my liege, I refused to answer it."

"*Ma foi!* dost thou refuse to answer me?" said the King, colouring, and with more impatience than dignity, at the same time striking his note-book upon the table.

"If your Majesty *commands* me to answer"—said Sir Hugh.

"I ask you the question, and I expect an answer." reiterated the King.

"I will obey your royal command, should your majesty impose it on me," replied the old knight; "but while your royal permission leaves me free to claim the constitutional privilege of every man under a capital accusation, I will do so; and, with all submission to your majesty, I must continue to decline to answer that question."

"My liege," urged Tyrconnel, in an under tone, "will you not command him to answer?"

The King hesitated; spoke a little in a low tone to D'Avaux; and only the last words he said were audible as he leaned back—

"He is right—ay, quite right—'tis not worth pressing. Sir Hugh Willoughby," he added, aloud, addressing the old knight in a tone of high displeasure, "as our wish hath not prevailed with you in this matter, we shall not add our command. By my troth, sir knight, there have been kings of England who would have dealt sharply with such contumacy; but let that pass—I had rather err on the side of clemency than exercise severity, however just. We have come into this our kingdom of Ireland," he continued, with dignity, as he glanced round the members of the council, "not to pursue and to punish, but rather to reconcile, to restore, and to forgive. He who reads the hearts of kings, and under whom kings reign, and to whom alone must even kings render an account —the great God knows how gladly we would make all our subjects, even those who have wronged us deepest, happy and secure—how gladly we would assure them that we are ever more ready to grant forgiveness than they to ask it; and that, save for the necessity of warning and example, the halter and the axe might be unused for us till doomsday."

"My liege," said Tyrconnel, with a sullen displeasure which he was at no pains to conceal, "the prisoner does not choose to answer the questions which I put to him; and as your majesty tolerates his recusancy, I shall press him with no further examination—I've done with him."

"Then, i' God's name, let him begone, and let us to other matters," said James, hastily; and then he added more austerely, "you may depart, Sir Hugh Willoughby; the council have no further need of your attendance."

Much relieved at the unexpected ease of his escape from a scene which he had anticipated with so much anxiety and alarm, Sir Hugh bowed low to his majesty, and, withdrawing under charge of the same official who had conducted him into the chamber, was once more committed to the keeping of the guard who waited in the outer room.

"That old gentleman," said Galmoy, slowly, as his sleepy eye followed Sir Hugh from the chamber, and continuing to lean indolently back in his chair; "that old gentleman presumes strangely upon your royal clemency; there is treason in every circumstance of his case, and rebel in every word he uttered; and yet he looks your majesty in the face, as confidently as though he had raised a regiment in your service. I could scarcely forbear laughing at his impudence."

"Yet, 'tis no laughing matter, Earl of Galmoy," said James, somewhat curtly; "this old knight is but a sample—and we fear too just a one—of the general temper of our Protestant subjects. They are schooled in rebellion—one and all, with but a few most honourable exceptions; I never trusted them."

"The history of these kingdoms, and of your royal house," said Tyrconnel, sternly, "affords memorable and bloody proofs of the wisdom of your majesty's distrust."

"True," said James, calmly; for though he always spoke of his unhappy father with decent respect, he felt no delicacy, and exacted none from others, in alluding to his fate; "but though the bulk of them always repudiated the extremity of that sacrilegious murder; yet, in general and in all other matters, they concurred with the murderer. I remember well, when the late king, my beloved brother, and I, were in France, we had often occasion to go into companies, without letting ourselves be known; and there we used to hear the Protestants—invariably and without exception—speak in praise of Cromwell; a circumstance which easily impressed us both with the conviction that they were, in the mass, *not* to be trusted; that they were rebels in their hearts."

"And truly can I aver," said Tyrconnel; "as far as my poor experience goes in the affairs of this kingdom, that whenever and wherever the difficulties of your majesty's service were the greatest, that I have found them rebels in *fact,* no less than in disposition."

"The whole island ought to be governed under martial law; it needs purging and bleeding, to a purpose," said Lord Galmoy, with a faint sneer; "by ——, if your majesty were to give them drumhead law, with an occasional taste of the thumbscrews and the strappado, where the truth was hard to come at, it would make men stare to see the order things would fall into before a month."

"Nay, nay—'tis better as it is," replied the king; "as soon as we have quelled this untoward revolt in the north, we shall take order so to dispose our troops, that insurrection for the future shall be all but physically impossible; and, meanwhile, we have loyal juries and able judges (and the king glanced graciously at the chief-justice, who bowed low in return); and thus furnished, we fear not lest the guilty shall escape. But enough of this; let us look to the proclamation touching the new coinage: methinks, Duke of Tyrconnel, you have got a rough draft of it, by you."

So, with the reader's leave we shall turn to other matters.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COUNTESS'S BOWER.

Hot and excited, Sir Hugh, accompanied by Jeremiah Tisdal, and attended by the guard, made their exit from the council chamber, and retracing their way through chambers and passages still occupied by loitering groups—they descended the ill-lighted staircase, and found themselves once more in the open yard. Tisdal glanced fearfully, as he passed, at the sentinel who kept watch by the door; and to his inexpressible relief, perceived that the guard had since been changed.

We mentioned before, that the old building which bore the name of the Carbrie, had been subdivided into three houses—the centre one being a well frequented inn—that upon one side a lodging house, in which, as we have seen, Sir Hugh's apartments were situated, and that upon the other, a sort of dingy, ambiguous-looking tavern, which seemed to be sinking rapidly into utter decay, and carried in its dreary and dilapidated aspect, a certain air of gloom and indescribable suspicion. Its desolation was not that of honest poverty, but the wreck and squalor of vice and secret villainy; its darkness and solitude were like the shrinking, sinister seclusion of conscious guilt. There was in the sluggish undulations of its close atmosphere—in the echo of its deserted passages—in the very creak of its half-rotten stairs and rat-eaten flooring, something which seemed to mutter and moan of warning and of peril—there was a certain influence which whispered DANGER in the ear of him who ventured alone to trust himself among its desolate chambers, and equivocal company; the street door gave admission to an ill-lighted and uninviting shop, rather than tavern-room; for a counter traversed it, on which were huddled some measures for liquor, and several glasses, amid the slop of stale libations, the ashes of tobacco, and several dirty stumps of candle; a few barrels, and some dozens of wine flasks in the back ground, supported the convivial pretensions of this inauspicious looking place; the wainscoating was broken, and full of rat-holes, and the furniture both meagre and crazy;—the whole air of the place com bining the character of darkness, discomfort, and debauchery, might best be conveyed in the one emphatic term—"cut-throat."

A tall female of some five-and-fifty years—skinny and large boned—arrayed in tawdry finery, was standing behind the counter; her shoulders leaning against the wall, and her arms folded; her hard, bony face was flushed, and the grin of pugnacity and defiance which distended her wide mouth, exhibited many a woeful gap in her discoloured teeth; she was redolent of brandy, and seemed in a state of considerable excitement, as she glanced from time to time, with her spiteful grey eyes, upon her companion—while all the time an almost imperceptible wagging of the head betrayed the malignant resolution with which she maintained her part in the domestic debate with which the dusky chamber was now resounding.

On the counter, with his back toward the entrance, sate the other occupant of the room—a short, square-shouldered, bloated fellow, perhaps some fifteen or twenty years the lady's junior—with a tallowy. sensual face, and a villainous eye. He was entertaining himself, as the discussion proceeded, by deepening a nick, with his penknife, in the counter.

"It isn't now—nor once—but always you're at it," said the gentleman—knocking the haft of the knife on the table by way of emphasis—"I tell you, you've made away with five pound of it—I know it—and I'll know *how*—I will."

He added an epithet and an oath which we need not perpetuate.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the lady, malignantly, "you're taking after the doctor—are you?"

"The doctor's in his grave," said the man, cutting a very deep slice, "the old boy has him, and I believe he's made a good exchange of it out of *your* hands, anyway."

"Maybe you'd like to follow him?" retorted she with a ghastly smile.

The man looked up from his task with an expression in which uneasiness struggled strangely with suppressed rage—

"It's threatening me you are—is it?" he said, while his tallowy face darkened. "Come—come—come, I know a trick worth two of the doctor's—put me to it—and see if I don't take care of myself and of *you* too; pish! do you think to bully *me*—do you?"

"I could do for you, my boy, as easy as that," and she snapped her fingers, with a laugh of scorn—"it's only a whisper—a word with the constable, and Margery Coyle is a widow again; tut—tut—you lump of a fool—no shaking of your knife at me—I don't value it a rusty nail—don't think to frighten me."

"You're as bad yourself, and you know it, you devil's carrion," said the man furiously, but scarce above his breath. "Talk of the constable, indeed—you're a pretty gaol bird to face the constable—aint you ?"

"Look behind you," said she, contemptuously.

A soldier was pushing at the shopdoor, and the ill-looking host, thus checked in a dialogue which might have led to results more practical than we have been called on to record, threw his legs over the counter, let himself down lazily on the floor, and proceeded to give admission to their guest.

The visitor entered with the familiar swagger of a man who knows he has the power to make himself welcome, and glancing round the chamber, observed—

"Quite private, I see—no company—eh ?"

"Not one, corporal—not a soul," replied the host—

"So much the better," replied Deveril, taking a gold piece from his waistcoat pocket, and raising it impressively between his finger and thumb. "I've spent a good round lump of money with you—Mr. What-d'-ye-call'em, and I mean to spend a trifle more."

"The keen sense of favours to come," inclined the short and bloated body of mine host with a profound and grateful acknowledgment.

"The fact is, I want a couple of rooms up stairs," continued Deveril, "they must open one upon the other, but I'll see to that myself—I expect some company—very particular company to supper this evening. Come up along with me—I'll see your apartments, and choose for myself."

They both accordingly ascended the stairs, and entered the chambers opening from the first landing. The building extended far in a backward direction, and had been very irregularly divided from its neighbour, so that Deveril and his guide found themselves involved in a rambling complexity of passages and dismal chambers, of which it would have been no easy matter to draft the plan. The proprietor had suggested several apartments, as presenting the required relation—that of communicating one with the other ; but his recommendations had been either wholly disregarded, or else dismissed with an impatient "pish ;" the soldier, however, at last resolved to cut the matter short by a full explanation.

"What I want," he said, in a low distinct tone, "is a chamber in which some company—I and a friend for instance, might sit and sup together, without guessing—do you mark me—that a *second* door communicated with it ; such a door must, therefore, lie like that of a closet in the panelling—dead flat in the wainscoat—you understand me—or if you have it behind the hangings. But dang it ! your tapestries are all in tatters and stripes, like rotten palls in a church vault," he added, glancing round him in disgust: "you have not a single corner such as I want; why, I thought all sorts of rat-traps and hiding holes must be plenty in such a tumble-down old barrack of a place."

"The countess's bower is the very thing for him," said the man, decisively. "There's a room they call the countess's bower," he continued—"that is the very thing you want."

And thus speaking, he led the way into a square panelled chamber, which opened upon the passage; and crossing the floor, he applied himself to examine the wainscoat in the recess beside the hearth, whose death-like damps had not been dispelled for many a long year by the blaze of a fire. After a little delay, he succeeded in forcing in a small door, cut without casing, or any other indication of its presence, except its key-hole in the wood; and this opened, gave admission to a very small chamber, with a tiled floor, and bare brick walls. At one end stood a little stone altar, with a stone crucifix upon it. Here, in this little oratory, doubtless, had the pious and high-born dame, to whom tradition assigned the occupation of the adjoining chamber, been wont, in times long past, to breathe her confessions and her prayers; and it may be too, to perform her vigils, her fasts, and her penitential meditations. How different the uses to which old father Time, in his cynical wantonness, was now about to consign this once holy haunt of the pure and the beautiful.

"'Gadso, this is the very thing, as I'm a gentleman," quoth the corporal, exultingly; "and that little hole, yonder, does it lead anywhere?"

And as he said this, he walked toward the aperture of which he spoke—a dark and narrow opening; and on looking down, he beheld a flight of steps.

"It leads to the lumber-closet, down stairs," replied the host.

"Good, sir, all right—quite right," said Deveril; "so much the better; this is precisely what I wanted. Well, then, come back again, and close the door. So, now then, listen to me; I and a friend will sup this evening in this square chamber here—the countess's bower, as you call it; have a good fire, for it's cursedly chill; and get a little furniture into it, that it mayn't look so deserted and queer. When I call for supper, lay it *here*, by the fire, and close by that door into the closet; do you understand?"

His entertainer bowed.

"Now," continued Deveril, "mind the rest, and make no blunders, but attend to me. This night, as soon as it is dark, two gentlemen, with cloaks on, will come into your shop—one of them shorter than the other—and inquire whether a private room has been engaged for them. Ask no questions; but as soon as the tall one hands you a shilling, bring them quietly up into the closet here, by the back-stair—stay! can one see through that key-hole? Ay, ay, all right; and now, do you understand me thoroughly?"

"Never fear, sir—never fear," said the man.

"Take this for earnest," said Deveril, placing the gold piece in the fellow's hand; "and if you behave properly, and do your business well, you shall have no need to grumble at your payment."

The man bowed, stole a sly glance of examination at the coin; but it was all right, and he pocketed it with another and a lower acknowledgment.

"There is one thing more that must be attended to," resumed Deveril, after taking a brisk turn or two up and down the chamber; "you know Sergeant Burke, of my regiment—the gentleman that drank here for a night and a day, at my expense?"

"I remember him well, sir," replied the proprietor of the King's Head.

"He will be here about the same time, with a few military friends," pursued Deveril; "let them have—mark me!—the chamber *under* this; am I understood?"

"It shall be done, corporal," replied he.

"And, do you mind me," continued the soldier; "as soon as they come—but not till then—do you run up here, and put a new flask of brandy on the table, and say, 'there's more below, whenever it's wanted.'"

"I'll do it, sir—I understand; I'll not forget it, sir," rejoined he.

Deveril cast an anxious look round the room, bit his nails, and seemed to grow uneasy and gloomy. After a pause, he said—

"You had better not have any other company near us; none within hearing, but those I've mentioned."

The man bowed, and promised implicit attention to the direction; and so both descended the staircase side by side.

"Look ye," said Deveril, stopping abruptly upon the landing, and speaking in a low tone, and with a sternness of voice and countenance which he had not exhibited heretofore; "this is no light matter, sir—men's *lives* hang upon it. Beware how you whisper one word of what has passed between us; and doubly beware how you fail in executing any one of the directions I've given you: you'd better have lost a hand or an eye, than fail in one tittle."

As he spoke the concluding words, he griped the fellow's arm with a pressure so violent, that it almost forced the tears into his ill-favoured eyes; and then thrusting him from him, the musketeer silently walked down the stairs, and forth into the public street.

"That's a queer fellow," muttered the host, as he followed Deveril's movements, with a sinister glance of mingled wonder and dislike—"a queer fellow, and knows the world, whatever his business be. Well, who cares, he pays well, and that's the main point to look to."

CHAPTER XXV.

BURNT BRANDY FOR TWO.

While this was passing, Sir Hugh, in his lodging, sate in anxious and gloomy conference, with a shrewd and seasoned veteran of the law, Caleb Crooke, and his sour and gloomy companion, Jeremiah Tisdal. A danger at a distance, proverbially a very different matter from a danger at hand, is often, and happily for ourselves, unduly despised; but as the interval in which the thousand and one fortunate accidents, on which we have unconsciously reckoned, may possibly arise, wears fruitlessly away—the dreaded event presents itself at last, in the stern, hard lineaments of actual reality, and often with an aspect as appalling as though it had arrived wholly unlooked for, and with all the heightened terrors of surprise. It was thus that Sir Hugh, now that he began to investigate the details of his own case, and to examine the chances of ruin or escape, with the severity which the near approach of the decisive issue demanded, felt his stout heart shaken, and his once cheerful mind filled with the worst forebodings. His own misgivings were, perhaps, the gloomier, that it was obvious to his now nervously-sensitive observation, that the honest and intelligent professional adviser, who sate in consultation with him, spite of every effort to appear cheerful and assured, was in reality full of doubts, if not despondency. Sir Hugh sate watching, with absorbed and breathless interest, the varied expression of the crabbed attorney's sharp and intelligent face, as though his fortune and his life depended upon its slightest change; while Jeremiah Tisdal recounted coolly and clearly the evidence he was prepared to give.

"Shall I be allowed the aid of counsel?" inquired Sir Hugh.

"Certainly, to sit by and advise you," replied the man of writs and notices; "but his voice must not be heard in court. It is a hard rule: but you cannot be heard by counsel against an indictment for high treason."

"What think you of the jury?" urged the knight.

"In the heats and perils of these times, men's minds and hearts are alike unsettled and distempered," replied the attorney, "and I rely not on the impartiality of any jury. My sole trust is in the judges, and in the obvious weakness of the prosecution. At the same time I do confess, I would give a great deal that, at any sacrifice of money or property, you could make interest with some great man for a *nolle prosequi*—but come what may, our trust is in God and a good cause."

The attorney was collecting and arranging the notes which he had taken.

"Mr. Tisdal," he said, as he proceeded, "unless I mistake, your evidence will go far to extricate our honoured friend from his present difficulties."

He paused abruptly, for a servant entered at that moment, and brought a small crumpled slip of paper, which he placed in Jeremiah Tisdal's hand.

It was now almost dark, and the Puritan approached the solitary candle which burned in the chamber, and by its light read the following words:—

"LITTLE DICK SLASH to his old friend the Captain, greeting.

"I desire to speak with you—so leave your company, and come down to me. If you keep me waiting, I shall go up to you. Choose between these courses; for see you, and speak with you, I will.

"Yours as you shall treat me,
"DEVERIL."

Tisdal read this document over and over again, with such obvious and uncontrollable evidences of agitation, that even Sir Hugh observed the darkened expression which crossed his countenance, as he studied it.

"No ill news, Tisdal, I trust?" inquired the old knight.

"No—nothing—no, Sir Hugh," stammered he, as he crumpled the paper in his fingers, and thrust it deep into his pocket. He walked first a step or two towards the door, then paused irresolutely, and strode to the window, whence he looked sternly and eagerly downward, and along the street, in both directions; then returning, he said abruptly—

"I'm called away, Sir Hugh; I am no needed here further at present. I shall return speedily."

His excited and flurried manner was so remarkable as he uttered these words, and moved from the chamber, that Sir Hugh and his attorney looked on one another in silent wonder for some seconds after the door had closed.

"A strange fellow that," said the latter. "He looked as though he were on his way to the gallows."

"He is a strange, gloomy, and excitable man," said the knight; but brave and trustworthy. I've known him long, and seen him often tried."

As they thus conferred, the subject of their discourse descended the staircase, and needed no guide to indicate the place where his visitor was to be found, inasmuch as he heard the well-known voice of Deveril, in jocular converse with the servant, at the street door.

"Ha, Mr. Tisdal," he exclaimed, assuming, much to the Puritan's relief, a tone of respect, "I am glad to see you, sir."

Jeremiah nodded, and silently walked forth and pursued his way for some time in profound and obstinate taciturnity. At last he turned suddenly upon Deveril, who was smoking lazily at his side, and abruptly asked—

"Well, what is it you want?"

Deveril removed his pipe, and spat upon the ground; and, shrugging his shoulders as he looked, with a half laugh, upon the Puritan, he said—

"Why, what an ill-conditioned churl he has turned out. This comes of your Munster farming, your turf and buttermilk! Why, man, you're scarce fit for civil company. What do I want! Nothing—nothing from you—nothing in the world but your company. You treated me in the country, and I'll treat you in town."

"I don't want your company—I don't want your supper," said Tisdal, gruffly.

"Come, come—you're too savage; rot me but it won't do," rejoined Deveril. "It's better to be friends than foes, especially where it costs you nothing. Come—I believe I'm the best off of the two, at present; and since I joined the army, and entered his Majesty's service, I've set up as a sort of a sly saint, in the same line as yourself, barring that I go to mass, and you to another sort of mummery; so take courage, and remember I have a character now to look after, as well as you. Come, come—we must keep terms; it's better to have a cup of sack than to draw daggers on one another, without a cause. Come along man; be advised."

Induced by such speeches, and, more than all, by the obvious prudence of avoiding an unnecessary rupture with this man, so long as he was disposed upon reasonable terms to observe a truce, Tisdal moodily suffered his communicative companion to lead him into the "King's Head," the inauspicious tavern, among whose dusky chambers we have already followed Deveril.

Behold them, therefore, seated by a blazing fire, in the old panelled chamber which tradition called the countess's bower. A piece of rush matting covered a patch of the floor, beside the hearth, and upon it stood the table with their snug refection disposed in inviting confusion over its white cloth. The candles upon the table, indeed, but feebly lighted up the wide expanse of the deserted chamber ; but the flickering blaze of the hearth had dispelled the damps, and sent its ruddy pulsations of fitful light into the most distant corners and recesses of the apartment.

" Sit down in your chair, old bully ; choose a pipe, and help yourself out of this," cried Deveril, doing the honours, and chucking his tobacco-box across the table to his comrade ; while he threw himself into a seat, and glanced at the bright fire with a cozy shrug : " a snug fire," he continued, significantly, " a snug fire, captain, though not quite so warm as Drumgunniol, eh ?"

" The place is burned," said Tisdal, doggedly ; not choosing to understand his comrade's sneer.

" Burned ! well, that's no great news to me," rejoined Deveril, crossing his legs, and planting one elbow carelessly upon the table, while he proceeded to chop and shred his tobacco ; upon which he smiled the while, as sarcastically as if his conversation was addressed exclusively to it ; " no great news, seeing I beheld the bonfire with these eyes, and should, had you but seen out your pleasant frolic, myself have lent a few pounds of grease to the blaze ; come, old Snap, be frank and friendly, and say, in confidence, did not you mean that I should broil in your old tinder-box of a house."

" How could I help you, blockhead ; I had well nigh perished myself," said Tisdal, roughly.

" Aye, indeed ? that would have been a blow to the religious world," said Deveril, with a look of concern.

" But how do you satisfy me for my money, comrade ; the gold and silver you stole from beneath the crab-tree in the paddock ; account with me for that," growled Tisdal.

" Dreams and fancies, friend ; the fire has fried your brains, old boy—and these are the fumes and vapours—gold and silver, crab-trees and paddocks ;" cried Deveril, throwing himself back, and shaking his head, slowly ; " take care, saint Jeremiah—thy pious rigours, thy austerities and mortifications are fast unsettling thy wits ; 'tis all pure fancy, or, if it be anything more, I at least comprehend it not ; and what's more," he continued, altering his manner to one of very distinct and decisive significance ; " I never shall comprehend it either, to the end of the chapter ; so let us turn to something more intelligible."

"And how," continued Tisdal, "how do you defend your cruelty to poor Bligh, my trusty servant, whom you shut into the house, and committed to the flames."

"Nay," cried Deveril, with real sincerity; I know nothing of that; he must have fled into it from the Irish. I was far away ere then; but was he burned, really and actually burned alive?"

"Burnt to a cinder, poor dog," said Tisdal.

"Well he was the stupidest booby, that Bligh—just the sort of fellow to run into a house on fire, and burn himself to tinder," said Deveril; and as he reflected on the adventure, it gradually struck him in so ludicrous a light, that he first chuckled, and then laughed outright, until the tears overflowed his eyes.

"And so," resumed Deveril, as soon as this hilarious explosion had quite expended itself; "the old farm-house and the saintly youth, are actually burned to smoke and ashes—dust and charcoal; it was a comfortable old place—devilish comfortable; and you got it, you know, a dead bargain."

Deveril said this in a careless sort of way, and without even glancing at his companion, who rose as if stung with a sudden pain—sate down again, and scowled once or twice quickly upon him, as if upon the point of speaking, but he held his peace.

"Come," said Deveril, "I'm your entertainer to-night; and gibbet me but I'll treat you like a gentleman; rot it, I'll have no moping. Odd's life, man, we know one another; where's the good of striving to humbug? it's no bite—file against file—so as well to let it alone. There's the backgammon-board—there's the burned brandy, and all the rest—and here am I, your old bully comrade, ready to play you a hit, or tip you a stave; or,—come—to begin—ladle a glassfull, and listen to me, while I tell you the ups and the downs of little Dick Slash, since we parted company in merry Lincolnshire."

Tisdal complied in silence, and thus together sate these two ancient companions in iniquity, changed in aspect, and one, at least, not less so in mind, since their old days of sin and riot, and now after their long separation, once more so strangely brought together by the whims of fortune—there they sate, quaffing "pottle-deep potations," from the bowl of burnt brandy—Tisdal's favourite beverage, of old—and talking over, with growing interest and recklessness, their old remembrances. Under the influence of the potent bowl, all the superinduced formalities of Tisdal's puritanism gradually melted away and vanished, piece by piece, revealing the natural character of the man, until, in all the indestructible vividness and strength of its old passion and daring, the dark and fiery spirit stood confessed.

The backgammon board at which they had been playing—for Tisdal had, as we have said, for the nonce forgotten his puritanism—was now shoved aside, and deeper and fiercer grew these ominous revelries. Strange and wild was Deveril's excitement, as, with flashing eye and a face flushed, but not with the glow of intoxication, he ran through his adventures, comic, tragic, and perilous, with a rapidity and a rude fascination of descriptive force which absorbed his old comrade in its interest, and fired him, in turn, with a corresponding excitement and reckless unreserve (fatal excitement—fatal unreserve) ; and thus hour after hour flew by, and found them still in deep carousal.

These mad orgies were at their highest and loudest when the innkeeper entered with a flask of brandy in his hand.

" A new flask of brandy, corporal," answered the man, fixing his eye on the soldier, as he placed the bottle on the table, and then added slowly—" and there's more below, whenever you please to want it."

He paused for a minute, looking with steady significance in Deveril's face, and then turning, left the room, without saying another word.

Deveril's hilarity subsided—the blood left his face ; a dark and sinister expression gradually gathered upon its unsightly features, deeper and blacker every moment ; he drew two or three long breaths, with something between a shiver and a sigh, and rose abruptly from his seat.

" What's the matter?—what's gone wrong with you now, you gallows dog?" inquired Tisdal, in a tone whose surprise, if not suspicion, was ill-qualified by a semblance of rough jollity.

" Nothing at all—a sort of a chill ; the room is cold, isn't it?" replied Deveril, with an unsuccessful effort to appear at his ease. " Take some liquor, and never mind me."

Tisdal looked at him doubtfully and steadily for some time ; and Deveril's uneasiness seemed rather to increase than diminish as he stooped down, and taking the poker in his hand, began to batter it heavily upon the hearth.

" What the devil ails you?" said Tisdal, more uneasily, while a vague suspicion of some unknown mischief connected with the incomprehensible movements and conduct of his comrade, began to fill his mind ; and after a pause, he added sternly and uneasily—

" I'll not stay here to see you play the fool ; so good night."

" What are you afraid of—eh?" said Deveril, with a ghastly laugh ; and striking again and still harder upon the hearth with the massive poker, " Curse your nonsense ; what are you dreaming about?—what are you afraid of?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TUSSLE AND THE EVES DROPPERS.

Confirmed in his suspicions, undefined as they were, Tisdal rose hastily from his seat.

"Don't go—you must not go; you shan't go," cried Deveril, planting himself between Tisdal and the door, and affecting to laugh, while the hilarious cachinnation was horribly belied by the expression of his face. "Why, we've not well begun yet, rot it; you shan't turn tail at this time of night; you're *my* guest, you know—and I'm master here."

As he spoke, he continued to affect a playful jocularity, which, however, did not prevent his companion's observing the deadly expression which lurked beneath it, and remarking also that he clutched the poker with the genuine earnestness of a man prepared to employ it as a weapon of offence.

"Let me pass," cried Tisdal, with the ferocity of thoroughly aroused suspicion.

"Nonsense, nonsense," continued Deveril, in a tone half jocular, half soothing, but which filled the mind of Tisdal with the deadliest fears.

"Let me pass, or by ——," cried the puritan, with something bordering upon desperation, for he was unarmed.

"Hola! Burke—are you asleep?—here—murder—here," shouted Deveril, at the top of his voice, and no longer attempting to disguise the nature of his intentions.

Pressing his hat firmly down upon his brows, Tisdal grasped the ponderous brass candlestick, and hurled it at the head of his treacherous entertainer. Deveril, by quickly stooping, escaped the missile, which smote the old wainscoting at the further end of the room, with a crash which might have frightened the rats for ever and a day from the countess's bower; and in the next moment the two companions were locked together in desperate and deadly conflict. Tugging and striving, they wheeled and shuffled along the floor; down went the table—cups, glasses, bowl, flaggons, and all, rattling and rumbling over the dusty old boards; and down rolled the combatants over the prostrate table, over and over; and as Tisdal tugged and tumbled in this deadly grapple, in the flickering fire-light, he saw two strange figures, spectre-like, peering at him from the hearth.

" Deveril, Deveril," he muttered, half breathless, "you won't murder me—don't take my life."

" Burke, Burke," still shouted the redoubted Dick Slash, " come—will you come, d—— you, or I must brain him. Burke—hola, Burke, he's choking me!"

Tisdal heard no more; for, whether accidentally or otherwise, the heavy poker which they struggled for, descended stunningly upon his head, and in an instant all was dark, dreamless lethargy.

Disengaging himself as the soldiers entered, Deveril arose, torn and agitated, and smeared with the blood which flowed plenteously from Tisdal's wound.

" Get candles, will you—some of you," cried Garvey, his shrill voice strained to an absolute screech, in his intense agitation; for if he was alarmed at the violent struggle which he had but just witnessed, he was now doubly terrified at its result, fearing, and as it seemed, not without cause, that the unfortunate puritan was actually murdered. " Lights, will you?—lights! candles here!"

" Hold your fool's tongue," said Miles Garrett, gruffly, for he it was who had accompanied Garvey, and with him entered the room from the little closet which we have already described. " Hold your tongue, will you, or you'll have the whole street up here;" and grasping Tisdal by the collar, he dragged him up into a sitting posture. " He's not dead, and very little damaged either."

" He has mauled me to some purpose," said Deveril, now speaking for the first time since the conflict, and adjusting his torn shirt mechanically with one hand, the other still holding the ponderous poker, while he gazed in the heavy face of his betrayed comrade.

" Every man for himself, and God for us all. Egad, you did not give yourselves much trouble to get my weazand out of his gripe; and I have luck to thank, and not you, gentlemen, that I have a puff of breath in my body."

Candles were now brought in, and Tisdal was placed in an arm chair, and some water dashed in his face. An odd tableau enough the room presented: a great, old, damp-stained, dreary chamber, with a little group standing around one sitting form; Garvey, with a glass of water in his hand, frightened and fidgetty, pale as clay; in sinister suspense, splashing the cold showers in the face of their torpid victim, whose grizzled locks and livid features were drenched in blood and water.

Garrett, silent, stern, and gloomy, with his strong hand still upon the old man's collar; and Deveril coolly re-adjusting his disarranged attire, and stealing, from time to time, a curious look, half shrinking, half ferocious, at the puritan; and lastly, near the door, imperfectly lighted, with grounded muskets, stood the broad-hatted soldiers, silent and listless, while their corporal, in grim luxury, chewed a quid of tobacco. At last, Tisdal opened his eyes, stared wildly round, and attempted to rise, but fell again giddily into his chair, muttering incoherently all the while.

"Thank God—thank God," whispered Garvey, and the pious ebullition of gratitude we are bound to admit, was spoken in the genuine sincerity of selfishness; "by the law, sir, there's nothing the matter with him—no murder, after all."

"It's dark, sir—dark, sir—to be sure it is; dark—dark—curse the road, and the trees; dark—dark as pitch," muttered Tisdal, staring wildly before him.

"We'll get some more water," suggested Garvey, relapsing into alarm.

"Ay, ay—in the water, was it? A year ago, found there—so it was—dangerous bit, sir," continued Tisdal, and then, on a sudden perceiving Deveril, he said in a tone of alacrity—"ha, Dick—Dick—Dick—little Dick for ever; Dick, Dick at it again."

"The men may stand on the lobby, I suppose, sir," said Deveril, hastening to drown the voice of the bewildered puritan, and addressing Miles Garrett, at whose disposal the soldiers were placed.

"Ay, take them to the lobby," said he; and as the order was obeyed, Tisdal continued—

"Dick—Dick—he didn't hurt you, eh; no, no, no—it's nothing, is it?" and as he spoke, he raised his hand to his head. The sober black of his sleeve seemed to fix his gaze, and with a puzzled look of dismay and horror, he said—

"Dick, Dick, they've found you out; I often told you, my God, a thousand times, I told you, you'd come to the gallows; is it—tell me, *are* we blown?" he cried, with a bewildered look, gazing from face to face; "Dick—Dick, stand by me, and we'll have one blaze for it; blood and lightning! man, don't knock under."

He made a frantic effort to rise, but was easily overpowered, and kept in his chair, where he continued to sit in dogged silence, while, minute after minute, one by one, his scattered recollections returned, and slowly resumed their successive connexion, until at last the scene, in which he had just borne so principal a part, and all the occurrences of the evening, in their true bearings, stood fully reinstated and restored before his mind's eye. At length, after a silence of many minutes, he said, in a tone of stern reproach—

"Deveril, you have done for me! You're a blacker scoundrel than I took you for. You once had a notion of honour about you: you're nothing now but a stag—you're not game, what you once were—you're not game."

"Game as *you* are"—retorted Deveril, with an ineffectual effort to appear perfectly at his ease, for spite of his effrontery, there was something so indefensibly *unprofessional* in his conduct to his old associate, that he felt an emotion almost akin to genuine shame, as he attempted to return his steady gaze of gloomy reproach.

"I might have served you out. I might have blown your fox's head off your shoulders—I might have taken your life as easily as drawn a trigger, when you came to Drumgunniol a few weeks ago, but like a chicken-hearted fool, I spared you," continued Tisdal, bitterly.

"Thank you for nothing," replied Deveril, scornfully. "You thought the wild Irish might do it as well. My fox's head, as you call it, saved me there, and no love of yours, comrade."

"Gentlemen," said Tisdal, suddenly rising, after a considerable pause, "you have no right to keep me here. I'm no prisoner—I shall leave you now—I'm a free man."

At a word from Garrett the door opened, and the guard showed themselves. Tisdal threw one look of rage and despair at Deveril, and then cast himself again into the chair.

"Well," said he, at length, in a tone of sullen, bitter despondency, "what do you want of me? Speak out, and have done with it, can't you?"

"You see, Mr. Tisdal, you had better behave peaceably," said Garrett. "There is nothing to be gained by violence. We are protected, and you in every way in our power—you have been overheard—your admissions and confessions; and so, methinks, a submissive behaviour will best become you, as the reverse will inevitably make your position only the more perilous. You see those soldiers—*we*, too, are armed: and I tell you fairly, that, except with my permission, you shall not leave this room alive. So, Mr. Tisdal, let me recommend you calmly to submit to what cannot be avoided."

"I'm betrayed and lost," muttered Tisdal.

"No, no—not lost," interrupted Garvey, with one of his sweetest smiles of villainy—"that is, unless you choose it. No, no—not lost at all."

"Mr. Garvey says truly," resumed Miles Garrett. "You shall have the choosing of your own fate. We shall confer with you for a time, and submit your fortunes to your own decision."

Garvey, meanwhile, was arranging some paper, which, along with a small ink-horn and pens, he took from his coat-pocket, and, mounting a pair of spring spectacles upon his nose, he completed his elaborate preparations for writing.

The soldiers withdrew—the doors were closed—and Tisdal was left alone with his three oddly-matched companions.

Half an hour passed, and an hour; and the sentinels who kept watch on the lobby were yet undischarged. They had heard nothing but the broken hum of voices from within, sometimes raised in vehement expostulations, sometimes in ferocious threats and imprecations, and once or twice was heard a voice as of one whose heart was wrung with agony unspeakable—a bitter, hoarse moan of anguish and horror unendurable. Then, again, these abrupt discordant outbreaks would subside into the same level hum, and at times even into utter silence. Thus time wore away, until at last the guard of musketeers on the lobby saw the chamber-door open, and Deveril come forth.

"Well," said he, with a yawn, "it's settled after all, and without troubling you, gentlemen. He turns out to be a safer man than we took him for, and no crop-eared Covenant rascal after all, though he has a deuced Whiggish sort of a slang and toggery about him; but he's a true man, corporal—a true man."

The corporal, who was somewhat tired of his occupation, spit through his teeth upon the floor, and, giving his quid a new turn, remarked morosely that—"He did not care the butt-end of a burned match if the devil had him."

In the countess's chamber, meanwhile, Garrett was standing by the table reading, with an air of evident satisfaction, the last sheet of several, on which the ink was scarcely yet dry. They were the sworn depositions of Jeremiah Tisdal. The Puritan himself sate just as we left him, except that his elbows were leaning on the table, and his face buried in his coarse sinewy hands; so that only his burning forehead and its swollen veins are visible.

"So far so well," said Garrett, as he slowly folded the document, and carefully placed it in his deep pocket; "we have done with you for the present."

Tisdal lifted his arm with an expression of rage and menace, but shame or compunction overcame him, and he once more buried his face in his hands, and remained silent.

"Pooh! pooh! Mr. Tisdal—what can ail you?" said Garvey, in his most soothing accents. "There—there—why, you have done no wrong, and need not be ashamed of any one."

With this remark, Garvey bundled up all his appliances, and hurried after Miles Garrett, who had already left the room.

"Garvey, you must see the landlord," whispered Garrett in his ear, and, clutching him impressively by the arm, as he spoke; "you must see him, and arrange that other business; and, remember, *I* have no part in it; it is your own affair, mind you, and no business of mine."

"I understand, sir, of course. Mr. Garrett, it was my own suggestion," answered the familiar in a whisper as earnest. "You can pass out, and I will confer with him; but, somehow, I wish a few of these would stay in the way." He paused, glancing uneasily at the soldiers, who were moving before them down the broad, dim, old stair-case: "For, to be plain with you, I should not just choose to meet that old Puritan rascal in his present mood *alone*, and in such a cut-throat hole of a place as this."

"You're as arrant a coward as ever," said Garrett, contemptuously. "Do as you list, but see to it without delay."

Thus speaking, Garrett drew his cloak about him, and strode forth into the street, leaving his dependant to manage his *tete-a-tete* with the innkeeper as best he might.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEEDS OF DARKNESS.

Garvey looked wistfully at the departing soldiers, and then casting a hurried glance up the stairs, and seeing nothing in that direction to warrant a precipitate retreat, he timidly glided into the dram-shop at the side, enjoining silence by a significant gesture to Peter Coyle, the proprietor, as he glanced at his grim helpmate, who, with a flushed face, lying back in a high chair, was snoring in a tipsy doze. Stealthily passing her by, he entered a little closet, attended by his ill-looking host; and then, having cleared his voice once or twice, though he did not meditate raising it above a whisper, thus began:—

"Mr. Coyle," said he, "you know I'm a professional man—and it might often lie in my way to give you a lift. Your place has its advantages and disadvantages—but it happens to suit me; and to show you that I'm serious, I mean to try you with a job of some importance, and that immediately."

"By cock and pie, sir, you'll find me up to anything; for fair pay and short accounts is all I ask," replied the bloated innkeeper, with a sinister look, as if he expected some villainous proposal.

"I know it well, Mr. Coyle," replied Garvey, "and fair pay and cash on the nail shall be your meed. Now, observe me: the relative of a certain old lady, about whom you shall know nothing but exactly what I tell you, desires to place her for a little time in your charge. This is a rambling old house, and you must have abundance of out-o'-the-way apartments up stairs; let her have one of the most private, and as near the tiles as may be: for it's just possible that she may endeavour to do something queer; in short, to give you the slip, and cut and run: so the cock-loft is the place, under lock and key, do you mind. Look sharp is the word; for if she gets away, I promise you *you*'ll get into trouble. Don't tell that drunken old devil, there," he continued, confidentially, with a slight nod toward his interesting helpmate, who was snoring, as we have said, in the bar-room; "if she knows it, every body knows it; the secret must be your own, and no one else's—and your visitor must be as safe and as close as if she were in the Bermingham tower. You shall be well rewarded if you do your business; and, on the other hand, should you fail, I tell you fairly and once more, you were never in such peril before in all your days. So, bethink you before you undertake this job—count the gains, and count the cost, and then for your answer."

"If that's all, I'm agreed," rejoined the fellow, promptly; "that is, if so be, the terms are suitable."

"Good; then you shall hear from me again; and, meanwhile, hold yourself prepared—and take this for earnest."

Thus saying, Garvey placed some gold in the fellow's hand, and stealing out lightly, for fear of awaking the slumbering landlady, he gladly found himself once more in the protection of the public street.

Meanwhile, in the countess's bower, Jeremiah Tisdal was left wholly alone. There was that in the subject of his recent conversation, and above all in its result, so horrific, that spite of all his stoicism, he trembled in every joint, while he remembered it. With the scowl of fear-stricken villainy, he sate looking down movelessly upon the floor: when he did move, at last, his first impulse, strangely, was to stride to the outer door, close it, and draw the bolt. He next shut that which communicated with the closet, of which we have so often spoken, and secured it with one of the massive chairs, sloped prop-wise against it, making these arrangements with a breathless flurry and a jealousy, which would have argued the immediate apprehension of assault or arrest.

No longer restraining his agony, he smote his clenched hand upon his breast and his head, and groaned as if his very heart were bursting, while he walked distractedly from wall to wall of the ruinous old chamber. Jeremiah Tisdal was not a hypocrite: we have failed to represent him justly, if the reader has so esteemed him. He was one who would have given any thing he possessed on earth, save his life, to be assured that heaven was reconciled with him—anything but his *life*, for he had learned to fear to die. Through years of profligacy and crime, the principles instilled in his childhood had followed him, ever returning to his memory, and whispering terrors unspeakable to his conscience.

Remorse had for years been the passion of his life—the old nature of the man was indeed still there, but all subdued by the ghastly presence of a secret terror—moroseness and avarice, perhaps, because so entirely unlike the sins of his guilty youth, he had suffered unconsciously to creep into his heart; but living in constant remembrance of his evil deeds, and in ceaseless terror of the judgment to come, he did, with all the zeal of abject fear, seek in his own dark and fanatical way to propitiate heaven, and to earn safety from the doom, whose dread never ceased to haunt him night and day; the fear of death, except when overwhelmed in the instinctive excitement of actual conflict, had become with him a positive disease. He dared not die—and hence the dreadful power of the threat which that night had torn him from his hopes—the hopes to which he clung frantically, as the murderer of old might to the horns of the altar, and dragged him from the very sanctuary back again into all the terrors of retributive destruction: it was *sin* inexorably demanding back his bondman.

The remorseless claim he felt as though it had been thundered in his ears. To defer the evil day, he paid the price of his respite—betrayed his benefactor—bore false witness against the life of his friend. Oh, madness! that the work of years should be in one brief hour undone, and he once more the murderous slave of Satan. In his frenzy, he cast himself on his knees—threw himself wallowing on the floor, and called in his agony upon the Almighty, for pardon, at one time, and at another for destruction, in frantic incoherence.

At last, by a violent effort, he resolved to review, as closely as his memory would serve him, the whole substance and material of the statement to which he had that night subscribed his oath, with a desire of ascertaining the amount of mischief to Sir Hugh, involved in the perjury into which he had been coerced. This review, however, more than ever persuaded him that he had nothing to hope for—that he had ruined his friend.

Cold as stone, and shivering violently, as a man in an ague fit, Tisdal stood for nigh half an hour, by the fire-place—his damp hand clutched upon the mantel-piece. The agony of his mind was now increased by nearer terrors—the fear that he was ill, and, perhaps, about to die. Upon the projecting ledge of the mantel-piece, there stood a flask of brandy, scarcely half emptied, the only surviving relic of his ill-omened carousal. He swallowed nearly the whole of it at a draught, and threw himself into a chair by the fire. The overwhelming dram he had just taken speedily produced its effect; the floor rocked and heaved beneath him, like a labouring sea; the candles flickered and danced, and crossed and multiplied themselves; all was confusion and giddiness, until gradually darkness swallowed the chaos, and he lay snoring in heavy and helpless stupor.

Strange to say, it was not dreamless: he had slept, he knew not how long, when he was visited by a wild and awful vision. He dreamed that it was night—just such a night as that on which Deveril had so unexpectedly greeted him in the Grange of Drumgunniol. He was, he thought, returning to his house; and as he passed, he looked through the window into the glowing kitchen. His little niece, Phebe, was standing by the fire, and before her a man—gracious God!—with his throat cut from ear to ear; the girl's murdered father, with rapid and awful gestures, telling his tale of mortal wrongs. In his fearful dream, Tisdal thought he strove to move from the window, but without the power to stir, until the dead man, seeming to have ended his horrible story, pointed slowly at him where he stood; and thereupon, in his dream, the girl turned round, and with a measured step, walked toward him, while her features, once so pretty and innocent, grew ghastly and demoniac, and she cried aloud, as she came on—"JUDGMENT!"

With a start he wakened. He must have slept long; for the fire was now expiring, and one of the candles had burned out, and the other was flaring in the socket, and so faintly that its unequal flashes scarce reached the distant walls of the old chamber. Every thing was still, except for the soft fall of rain upon the windows. Such were the circumstances under which, on raising his eyes, he saw, as clearly as the uncertain and fluctuating light would allow, a mysterious and ill-defined form arrayed in some thin, fantastic festoonery of rags, which waved and fluttered strangely, moving backward and forward, toward the expiring candle and from it, in a sort of crazed and hovering dance—sometimes scarcely distinguishable from a flickering shadow upon the wall, and sometimes again, for the least imaginable point of time, just catching the light, and—merciful Heaven! showing, as it seemed, the terrific features of the dead—the face which had haunted him in his dream—wearing, at once, a look of terror, and malignity, and vengeance, in hideous incongruity with its fantastic movements. This fearful apparition, sometimes a shadow, and sometimes, for a second, a thing so distinctly terrific—and then, again, but a flaunting, flickering mist, seemed to flutter and hover in a strange sympathy with the expiring and uncertain light; and not the least horrible part of the infernal dance was, that it was all absolutely soundless. A sudden breath moved the dying flame—it trembled, flashed up, and expired, leaving Tisdal in utter darkness. For hours he sate, afraid to move—unable to pray, almost to breathe. The cold sweat burst from every pore—thrill after thrill of horror froze him—rigid and cold as stone he sate, unable to count the terrible hours, which, in their hideous monotony, seemed drawn out into whole years of unearthly agony. Gradually, however, the grey light of morning streamed into the dreary chamber, and Tisdal skulked, terror-stricken, from his seat. With a deep conviction that the dreadful apparition which had visited him in the night-time foreboded his own coming ruin, he hurriedly snatched his hat, and, not waiting to draw his mantle about him, unbolted the chamber door, and quitted an apartment, every object in which had now grown insupportably horrible. Dizzy and feverish from the unwonted excesses and frightful agitation of the previous night, he walked forth without interruption into the grey light and still breath of morning.

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Where is the stoic who can, unmoved, await the slow but steady approach of an inevitable danger—a danger stupendous, inexorable—which no exertion of his can frustrate, and no ingenuity escape? As the tired sailor, clinging to the torn shrouds of a wreck, watches the onward roll of the mountainous wave, that towers and blackens but the wilder, and vaster, the nearer it comes, so did old Sir Hugh, in the dreadful calmness of suspense, await the arrival of the day which was finally to determine his doom—to dispose of his fortune and his life. Days passed, and weeks; and at last the long-dreaded crisis was at hand. It was now the eve of that morn on which Sir Hugh Willoughby was to be arraigned for high treason.

The sun was just going down as Grace sate in mournful companionship with her father, in the dusky chamber of "the carbrie," and in the fitful pauses of their melancholy conversation, full many a wandering thought carried her back again to the pleasant woods and winding river, and the grey towers of Glindarragh; and sometimes, with a transient interest, she wondered how her old companions, her fond nurse, and gentle little Phebe fared; and whether they knew of the fearful danger in which the knightly master of Glindarragh at that moment stood. But no tidings had reached them. In those suspicious and terrible times, when letters were liable to be intercepted, read, and severely construed by the government, it had been judged most prudent for Sir Hugh, in his perilous position, to attempt no correspondence with his absent friends. While thus her fond fancy carried her back in many a flitting thought, to her loved home, the same sunset was gilding its grey walls. Within the deep shadow of a low-arched casement, pushed open to receive the fragrant breath of evening, sits a pale invalid, a young man, negligently but elegantly dressed—it is Percy Neville; and see, outside, arrested in her return with her troop of merry milk-maids, close by the grey window-sill, stands the graceful, artless, beautiful girl we have seen before, Phebe Tisdal, half reluctant, half gratified, blushing in reproachful confusion, and smiling with all her soft innocent dimples; so true, and withal so touching a smile, that one knew not whether to smile again or to sigh as he looked on it. But here we must not linger; back again to "the Carbrie" our story calls us.

Till midnight the old knight sate with his daughter, who read to him from time to time such passages as he desired from the Bible; and in the intervals they communed with what cheerfulness they might assume. Willing, however, that his child, whose pale looks filled him with new anxieties, should have some repose, of which she seemed to stand sorely in need, he bade her good-night, with a mournful serenity, and commending her to God's keeping, shut himself into his chamber.

Heart-sick, fearful, and well nigh despairing, poor Grace, seated by the window of her apartment, counted the weary hours. The hum of conviviality and the noises of riot had now sunk into profound silence, and every sound of human bustle, business, and pleasure, was hushed. It was a dark, moonless night of heavy plashing rain. There were no street-lamps in those days, and the dense obscurity of all without deepened, with a sort of depressing sympathy, the gloom which reigned within her mind. As she sate thus sorrowfully, she heard the rumble of carriage wheels, and the clang of horses' hoofs on the pavement, almost beneath the window where she sate. It stopped some little way up the street, at the same side; and almost at the same moment a lantern issued from one of the entrances, and moved irregularly, sometimes faster and sometimes slower, over the little interval which interposed between the line of the houses and the coach, in accordance with what might be the movements of some one engaged in engrossing conference with a companion. At last it stopped, and twice or thrice was darkened, as by the passing of persons between her and the light. Trifling as was all this, she became insensibly interested in what was passing—the more so, perhaps, on account of the utter loneliness of the hour, and the extreme darkness, as well as the tempestuous character of the night, which conspired to throw an air of mystery over these proceedings. It might be a hearse for a secret funeral, or a coach full of state conspirators; it might, in short, be anything dark, sinister, or guilty.

Oh! night, sweet, sad herald of repose, of dewy shadows and soft serenades, and mystic glorious dreams, how many minstrels have sung from earliest ages, when the world was young, thy wondrous gentleness and celestial beauties!—how many lovers have sighed, and wished thy shadows endless! and yet, oh, night! in all the chastened glories of thy starry court, for how many dost thou rise a queen of terrors!

She pushed the casement gently open; the buzz of men's voices in suppressed tones reached her ear through the night air, followed by the sound of the opening of the coach door; then came a stifled scream, as if through the folds of many mufflings; then it rose loud and piercing, and once more stifled as before. This was accompanied by the sound of feet, as of men staggering and stumbling over the pavement under a struggling load. The sounds seemed to follow the lantern into the entrance whence it had at first issued. The door was shut, and in the darkness the vehicle rumbled off as it had come, leaving all once more in profound obscurity and silence.

Chilled with a feeling akin to horror, the young lady hastily closed the window, and drew further into the security of the chamber. Had she but known fully the story in which that scream was a single incident, wild work it would have wrought with her heart and brain that night. Even as it was, in the intervals of her own immediate anxieties and fears, as she lay awake through the tedious hours of darkness, the shriek which had startled her still rang in her ears, and made her heart beat fast.

It was, as we have said, a dark and stormy night, and heavy drifts of rain, from time to time, rode upon the blast; muddy streams scoured the gutters, and the wet lay so deep in every rut and hollow of the pavement, that the foot passenger, as he plodded through the dusky streets, gave up in sulky despair the idle attempt to pick his steps, and recklessly plunged on through the pools and mire.

Few pedestrians trod the streets; all who could avoid exposure to the ungenial weather, were snugly housed; every place of entertainment in the city was crowded, and the guests seemed resolved to make amends by the boisterous riot of their mirth for the restraints to which the storm and rain subjected them.

Upon this dismal night, lights gleamed from the castle windows; one of those brilliant drawing-rooms which assembled all that was gay, and brave, and beautiful in the Jacobite cause, within the stately chambers of the royal residence, was then proceeding; and through the long rows of gleaming windows, in the intervals of the howling gusts, were faintly heard, the softened harmonies of merry music.

At the side of the quadrangle, most remote from those sights and crowds, wrapped closely in his mantle, and filled with ruminations by no means congenial with the spirit of revelry and mirth which reigned so near him, stood a tall, dark figure. He had twice walked to the dim lamp which overhung a doorway close by, to consult his watch, and twice returned with hasty strides to the shelter of the arched entrance, within whose shadow he had ensconced himself. At last, having satisfied himself that the appointed hour had arrived, this personage groped his way to the further end of the dark lobby, in which he stood, and knocked sharply at a door. It was opened by a servant who, on hearing Miles Garrett's name, ushered that gentleman—for he was the expectant in the cloak—up stairs, and into an apartment, where he left him in utter solitude. A fire was nearly expiring in the hearth, and four wax candles, in massive silver candlesticks, illuminated the chamber. It was furnished in the richest fashion, and hung with gorgeous tapestry. A portrait of the then Duchess of Tyrconnel—taken in all the splendour of her early beauty, before her first marriage—graced the wall, in a massive frame. A table, on which stood a large writing-desk, jealously locked, and a silver tray, with coffee cup and ewer, in the confusion in which a hurried enjoyment of that refection had left them, gave further token of the recent occupation of the chamber. A *couteau de chase,* moreover, dangled by its belt from the back of the tall chair that stood close by it.

Garrett removed his hat and cloak, and even went so far as to wipe his soiled boots in the skirt of the latter; he adjusted his wardrobe with the utmost care, and altogether exhibited a good deal of fidgetty uneasiness about the approaching interview, whatever its object might be. He listened for the sound of approaching steps—and hearing none, consulted his watch; and then again listened, with every manifestation of anxious and excited impatience, tempered, however, and in some sort subdued, by a certain awe and uneasiness, resulting from a consciousness alike of the uncertainty of his reception, and of the momentous importance of his success

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TYRCONNEL.

A considerable time elapsed, and found Garrett still alone, in the stately apartment in which our last chapter left him.

"It's two-and-forty minutes past the appointed hour," he muttered, as he glanced at his watch; "I fear he has forgotten it, or, perhaps, the insolence which they say has grown upon him, prompts him to treat poor gentlemen, as I am, like link-boys, or lackeys—as fit only to wait his pleasure, and dance attendance upon his caprice. S'life but it's growing bitter cold," he added with a shudder, and, acquiring courage with the irritation of disappointment and discomfort, he ventured to rake the embers of the fire together, and to throw on a fragment or two of wood; how far this new accession of hardihood might have carried him, it were not easy to say; his next proceeding would have probably essayed the daring sacrilege, of seating himself at his ease, in one of the rich, luxurious chairs, which seemed made to receive a ducal, or a royal pressure only; he was, however, effectually startled, and recalled alike from this meditated enormity, and from his mutinous temper, by the opening of a door in the further end of the chamber, and the entrance of the Duke of Tyrconnel.

Few forms could be more imposing; his stature was commanding, exceeding six feet in height, and, at the time of which we write, though not actually unwieldly through corpulence, as he afterwards became, he was full and large in a proportion which gave majestic effect to his towering figure; his complexion was a ruddy brown—his eyes of the darkest grey, and his features, though not prominent, eminently masculine and handsome, and over-clouded by a prodigious flowing periwig, of sombre brown. The expression of the countenance was grave, haughty, and even insolent—and there was a sternness in the compressed and down-drawn mouth, and a certain inflexibility and domineering pride in the whole character of the face, which, accompanied with the grand and massive proportions of his figure, and the gorgeous accessories of his splendid attire, rendered the *coup d'œil* absolutely over-awing.

As Garrett, standing with his hat in his hand, watched the stately and measured approach of the new made duke, he marked with wonder the change which a very few years had wrought in his face and form, and thought he could read at a glance in the impressive countenance before him, alike the man of action, of passion, and of policy; he saw the arrogance, the ambition, the arch-dissimulation, and the cruelty of that intemperate and wily spirit, as he bowed and cringed before him, with all the servile idolatry due to so portentous an incarnation of successful scheming and daring.

The Duke of Tyrconnel advanced gravely, and slowly, some way into the room, before he addressed his visitor, who stood before him in an attitude of awkward subserviency, and with an expression, half uneasy, and half sycophantic, his whole bearing contrasting strikingly enough with the lofty carriage and perfect breeding of the haughty favourite.

"Mr. Garrett, of Lisnamoe?" said Tyrconnel, inquiringly.

"The same, my Lord Duke," replied Garrett, again bowing profoundly.

The duke seated himself, but, without inviting Garrett to do so; and affecting to be dazzled by the light which fell full upon his face, he carelessly drew the table on which the candles stood, backward, until his features were in shadow—and then crossing one leg over the other, he leaned back in his seat, and once more fixed his eyes upon his visitor.

"Mr. Garrett," he at last said, in a cold and haughty tone, "you have a request to make, if I've rightly understood your purpose, from my brother; you solicit a grant of land, is it not so?"

"The same estate, your grace," said Garrett, "about which I applied to you, my lord duke, when the court of claims was sitting."

"Willoughby's property—I know it," said Tyrconnel.

"A great estate—a considerable property—your grace," said Garrett.

"A very great estate, sir—I know it," repeated Tyrconnel, with deliberate emphasis, and a pause of some two or three minutes ensued, during which Garrett in vain strove to read the dark, bold, inscrutable countenance of the dangerous man before him.

"You have got some securities of mine in your hands," said Tyrconnel abruptly.

"Two bonds, your grace, for three thousand pounds, and a heavy accumulation of interest," said Garrett, while a faint hope of a settlement began to glimmer upon his fancy.

"Good—yes—so it was," said Tyrconnel, slowly, and another silence followed.

"Methinks those bonds were paid," he resumed, gravely fixing his eyes once more upon the applicant.

Garrett was astounded—a faint, incredulous smile, hovered in his look of amazement—he hardly knew in what spirit his patron spoke, and he hesitated in some confusion.

"I say sir," repeated Tyrconnel, with a stern voice, and a menacing look—"I think—I am sure, those bonds are paid; bethink you, sir—for I must know how this matter stands, before I enter upon that other business in which you are so nearly concerned; my belief, sir, is, that the bonds are paid."

Garrett looked in the speaker's face, for some peculiar significance to guide him in this strait, but he saw nothing there but the insolent sternness of one who suspects the honesty of the man he looks on, and cares not to disguise, or qualify that suspicion. Tyrconnel looked as if he actually believed what he said.

"Your grace must pardon me," said Garrett, with an air at once cringing and deprecatory, "if I cannot immediately—just at this moment, call to mind—"

"Speak out, man—and at once," said the duke, in a peremptory tone, "if you wont admit this settlement, why, then, in God's name, dispute it, and so we part as litigants--for I promise you I'll not pay money twice over; your memory may serve you better than mine does me, sir—you have a perfect right to trust it, but I'll not be bamboozled into paying my debts twice over, as I've said."

Thoroughly alarmed for the fate of his application, Garrett now lost not an instant in recalling his false step.

"I crave your pardon, my lord duke," he said, with eager submission; "your grace has misunderstood me—I have misconveyed myself."

"I thought your memory might have served you so far," said Tyrconnel, with the haughty displeasure of an injured man.

"My lord, I am far from disputing the settlement of which your grace has spoken," urged Garrett.

"So you do remember it?" persisted he.

"Yes, I remember it—quite recollect it all, most clearly, your Grace," replied Garrett, who would have sworn he remembered the conquest or the flood at that moment, if only he could, by doing so, have restored the all-powerful favourite to good humour.

"Then bring the bonds and receipts for the consideration, sir, to-morrow morning, hither, and deal like an honest man." said Tyrconnel, still with extreme sternness. "You have done strangely, methinks, in retaining them in your possession for so long; let this be mended, sir, and promptly—to-morrow morning, before ten o'clock; you hear me, sir?"

Garrett protested that he would be punctual, and inwardly thought that the duke must possess either the most treacherous memory, or the most matchless impudence in all Ireland.

"You have made sacrifices for the king, Mr. Garrett," resumed Tyrconnel, with haughty condescension, after a brief pause; "you have zealously attached yourself to his cause; and have, moreover, relinquished your heresy, and become, I understand, a Catholic. I am acquainted with your claims—and you may reckon upon my interest with the king, in your behalf, should this Willoughby be convicted; his estate cannot better be bestowed—nay, sir, there is no need of formal speeches—I'm pressed for time; remember, ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

With a low and grateful reverence, and a countenance glowing with the irrepressible exultation of gratified avarice, Garrett, who, through this somewhat singular interview, had continued standing, withdrew—but ere he disappeared, Tyrconnel, on a sudden recalled him.

"Another word, Mr. Garrett," he said, in a low tone, glancing almost unconsciously in turn at the two doors of the chamber. Garrett returned, and stood once more, hat in hand, before this unprincipled great man. Tyrconnel looked at him thoughtfully, and, as it seemed, almost with embarrassment. He then averted his gaze to the hearth—then, again, glanced rapidly toward the doors of the apartment—and pushing the small table on which the candles stood, still further back, he said—

"It is some years since I last saw you, Mr. Garrett, in London; I need not remind you of the nature of the commission you then undertook; you have, I presume, sir, fulfilled it faithfully?"

"Faithfully, your grace, most faithfully," replied Garrett, with more assurance; for he felt that upon this topic, at least, he had the duke at some advantage; "in strict accordance, in every tittle, with your grace's wishes."

"And—and—the person—the lady—Lady Willoughby, herself," said Tyrconnel, with an effort; "does she still live?"

"I'faith she does," rejoined Garrett—with an ungainly shrug, and a shake of the head; "and I was well nigh adding—if it be no harm—I *grieve* to say it."

"How does she?" pursued Tyrconnel, curtly—for he obviously resented the growing familiarity of Garrett's manner.

"Why, about as well, I suppose, as a cast-off lady-love generally does," rejoined Garrett, carelessly; "a good deal down in the mouth, lean, sallow, and hippish—always dying, but still alive."

Tyrconnel looked down, suddenly, upon the floor, and then as suddenly shot a black and frowning glance upon the speaker. He paused, however; and raising his jewelled hand for a few seconds to his forehead, recovered his calmness, to all appearance, except that his face was still a little flushed.

"And gossip, scandal—has it grown silent?" he asked, in a low tone; and, fixing his eyes once more upon Garrett—"or is it, at all events, still at fault—still on the wrong scent?"

"That it is, by my troth," said Garrett, with a chuckle, which had in it a mixture of familiarity and glee, indescribably villainous and offensive; "half the world, the old gentleman included, make me a present of the sin, as your grace did of the mistress."

"Keep your own place, sir—be advised, keep your own place," interrupted Tyrconnel, in a tone so peremptory that Garrett almost started; and still more hotly and arrogantly, he continued—"you are disposed, methinks, to forget yourself, and your position, and whom you are speaking to. S'death, sir, you shall know where you stand, and how you stand. You presume, sir—presume, because I have employed you," he continued, with increasing intemperance—for when his passion once broke bounds, its course was headlong and torrentuous beyond all parallel—and the suspicion, however faint, that Garrett imagined that he stood within his power, incensed his pride almost to madness; "you presume, because I have used you—used you like the scoundrel pander you were willing to make yourself. By ——, if I thought you dared presume upon your fancied usefulness, I'd teach you to know and remember me, while life is left you."

It was hard to determine whether, in this sudden explosion of invective, there was more of passion or of policy; his face, indeed, was charged with the blackest tempest of ire—but at the same time, the faintest imaginable approximation to a smile curled his lip, as his eye rested upon Garrett, with a glance, half intimidating, half observing. If the display were premeditated, however, it was well judged; for though Garrett manifested, at first, alike by his attitude and his countenance, the impulse of that physical courage in which he was by no means deficient—yet a moment sufficed to extinguish its angry fires, and to leave him cowed and submissive before the domineering duke; and with an air so meanly cringing and humble, that he seemed ready to fall down and worship before the great man's shoe-tie, in all the profoundest abasement, and idolatry of sycophantic awe.

He stammered—he pleaded—he retracted—he explained; in short, he apologised, and that so humbly, that Tyrconnel at length condescended to nod his satisfaction, and to tell him haughtily that he might withdraw, under the assurance of his renewed favour.

With many a profound and ceremonious bow, Garrett retired through the door by which he had entered.

Tyrconnel rose with a gloomy look, and leaning upon the mantelpiece, rested his forehead upon his hand for a time, in anxious abstraction.

"Ill-fated, unhappy—most unhappy woman!" he muttered slowly and sullenly. "The thought of her has troubled me—troubled me sorely—more than once; but what need to vex one's self about the past? Such follies—affairs of the heart, and all that—are pretty well over with me; and by my faith, were I to turn monk for my sins, I have weightier matters than a foolish intrigue to think of."

He sank again into silence, and his thoughts shifted gradually to other and more practical matters. He walked moodily to the window, drew the rich damask curtains, and looked forth upon the stormy skies, across which the black scud was drifting.

"Threatening—changing; now the stars peep out; and now they're wrapt in storm and vapour," he muttered in gloomy abstraction, and slow and broken sentences. "Now, the happy lights of heaven appear; and now all's lost in murky tempest. Just so—just so; a chequered, almost cheerless struggle; a day's despair for every hour of hope. How will this end—how will it all end? Oh, God! that I could see two years onward into the unrolled book of fate! Where will be all this state and ceremony then?—this goodly pomp and order, where will be the aspirants and the favourite?—where these portly priests, and gilded soldiers, and all the scheming and the splendour of this court?—and the King himself! Aye, aye, well-a-day; and I—what are these orders, and these baubles, and this dukedom? While I walk among these peers, and bishops, and judges, and generals, and all the rest, and see the poor King smiling, I behold ruin through all this frippery and state. 'Tis all horrible masquerade. Fools—fools! a week may turn this pomp to beggary—this music and jollity into howling and gnashing of teeth; away with this hollow mummery; off with your disguises: fly to your prayer books and confessions. We tread a stage, God knows, crazed and rotten in every plank; and, Heavens! what an abyss beneath! Yet see *how* they tread it!—as if it were rock—living rock—adamant: down to the earth's centre and foundation, adamant. Even that scheming rascal, Garrett; I dare swear he would think himself sorely wronged were we to limit his grant to one for life or a term of years."

He turned from the window. "And yet," he added bitterly, after a pause, "these are the men who call me rash, headlong, violent, impolitic. Idiots! had it not been for my rashness, where would all this and they have been now? Where would the army, the militia have been, all Protestant as they were? in open mutiny. For these crea tures of court favour—of *my* favour—indeed, there is but one chance; but I—*I* have another and a deeper game to play; I bide my time. Would to God, the King were back again in France, and I once more the pilot of affairs! Well, well; all in good time—all in good time."

The duke stood for a moment before the full length mirror, to rearrange the equipments of his stately dress. The anxious disquietude was smoothed away from his swarthy features, and all their bold haughty gravity returned, as he quitted the room to take his place once more among the splendid and stately groups which filled the great saloon of the castle with all the gorgeous gaiety of courtly pageantry and mirth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VERDICT.

The courts of law, at the time of which we write, were held in an old and gloomy building adjoining Christ Church; so crazy and decayed, indeed, that it was found necessary, a very few years later, to take down and rebuild the whole structure.

A strong guard of musketeers occupied the entrance; barristers, in their gowns and falling collars, and solemn black perukes, flitted back and forward through the dark passages, like ill-omened apparitions—the sable familiars of the place. The body of the Court of King's Bench was crowded. The entrance and mustering of the jurymen, the fussy arrangements of the sheriff, the continual pressure of the crowd, and the occasional interference of the guard or the tipstaff, filled the old chamber up to its very roof with din and uproar.

Miles Garrett, his eye unusually bright and restless, and his face pale and clammy with anxiety, stood in one of the less-frequented passages of the building, his elbows leaning upon a high window-sill, and one hand shading his brows. He turned quickly about as a step approached: it was that of Thomas Talbot.

"So," said the latter, coolly, with a sort of sneer, "early upon the ground, Garrett! You're a keen sportsman, by my faith! Is the quarry yet in sight?"

"It's hardly yet time," said Garrett, consulting his ponderous gold watch. "You can see for yourself, a few steps further on, through the arch into the court."

"What of the witnesses?" asked Talbot, with a cautious glance down the passage; "what of the dragoon, O'Brien?"

"Safe, waiting in Londonderry for despatches," answered Garrett.

"Keep your eye on the Roundhead rascal—where have you got him?" pursued Talbot.

"There," replied Garrett, pointing to a small door opening off the lobby.

"Don't let him falter. If need be, give him brandy; he must be kept up," said Talbot.

A step approaching warned him to be gone.

"We must not be seen together—I'll into the court," he said, hastily, and strode down the passage, humming a song as he went.

Meanwhile, in the court itself, the bar had mustered. The attorney-general, Sir Richard Neagle, and the solicitor-general, had unfolded their ponderous briefs, and fussily began to look through them, whispering from time to time in question or consultation together, and sometimes referring, in short decisive whispers, to "the juniors" behind them, who instantly dived into text-books or reports of state trials, and in eager, half-frightened whispers, communicated the results to their leaders.

The crowd every moment grew denser—many a richly-dressed gentleman, in plumed hat and gold-laced suit, standing among the ignoble throng; and here and there some Protestant merchant, anxious and frightened, but too curious to leave the scene unsatisfied; and in the back-ground, over the grim expanse of heads, gleamed the halbards and muskets of the militia, who kept guard. All was expectation, fuss, and bustle, squeezing and jostling. Men gaped, and gossiped, and yawned, and fidgeted, and consulted their watches in restless impatience; and there was such to-ing and fro-ing, such chatting, and laughing, and uproar, that the very cobwebs depending from the oaken roof, shivered and trembled in the clack and buzz.

In the midst of all this weary waiting, and noise, and clatter, was heard, at length, the entrance of the court official, settling the cushions, and arranging the pens and paper for the Bench; and at last the loud cry of "Silence in the court!" announced the approach of the judges; and, in all the pomp of scarlet and ermine, with collar and ruffles of lace, and a portentous flowing black wig, Chief Justice Nugent, now Lord Riverston, with his sharp hooked nose, severe eye, and thin ascetic lip, sailed awfully in, and, bowing to the bar, sate silently upon the bench.

Mr. Justice O'Neile followed. As this was what is called a trial at bar, all the judges sate, and as three judges then formed the full bench, in each of the law courts in Ireland, and as it happened that one of these three seats had been suffered to remain vacant, the full court included but the two judges we have named. Sir Hugh Willoughby was now called in due form, and a hushed silence of breathless expectation awaited his appearance.

There came the venerable old man, slowly pressing through the crowd, accompanied by a friend, and a guard of two men. A low hiss followed him as he advanced, but this insult was but a partial demonstration, for those immediately about him pressed back and made way for him, as he moved onward to his trial.

When he took his place at the bar, and looked calmly round him, it were hard to say whether the lines of nobleness or affliction most prevailed in his faded features.

"Where is Tisdal?" whispered old Sir Hugh, somewhat anxiously, in the ear of Caleb Crooke, his solicitor.

"I know not," answered he, glancing inquiringly around. "Would he were here;" and he whispered to a messenger, who bustled away to find him.

Aye, where was Tisdal? Soon enough is old Sir Hugh to see and to hear that trusted villain, though now he may not; yet, reader, if you glance with us into that dark, mildewed closet, not twenty yards away, what see you there? Tisdal! aye, Tisdal—though you scarce know him in his desperate solitude. See his arm extended on the table—the fingers clutched together, as in a death spasm; see the elbow of the other arm upon his knee—his head thus propped, and his hand locked in the shaggy hair, as though he would wring and wrench the very scalp off; see the terrors of his death-like face—mark how he shakes, how the strained sinews vibrate—hear those sobs and shudders; and then turn back your gaze from that lost demoniac being, to the high, serene aspect of the forsaken old man, and say which is the happier of the two.

The jury are sworn—Mr. Attorney-General Neagle rises grimly to his stern duty, with a rustling of silk, and a crumpling of papers—the crowded court becomes hushed, the clear voice of the advocate alone is heard, and the work of LAW begins.

The speech of an attorney-general, in those days, if he did his duty, was expected to be a very different thing from the address of the same functionary in modern times. It was, from beginning to end, a piece of coarse invective and impetuous railing; in which the guilt of the accused was not only taken for granted, but heightened and exaggerated by the fiercest and darkest colouring. Sir Hugh was often on the very point of yielding to the impulses of the wrath and scorn inspired by this unmeasured oratorical discipline, and interrupting the prosecutor in his harangue, by indignant recriminations, which would have but opened a new field for the rhetoric of the advocate; and in all probability seriously diminished whatever chance Sir Hugh might still have had of escape.

The urgencies of his friends, however, were seconded by the feelings of astonishment and perplexity with which other portions of the speech filled the mind of the old knight; and he was forced to listen, with breathless wonder, which hovered between horror and incredulity, as the florid barrister informed the jury that he would prove the prisoner to have been in the constant and daily habit of holding treasonable language with his friends and followers—and that, too, of the most atrocious kind; and that, moreover, he had declared to one much in his confidence, but who, prompted by the compunction of his wounded conscience, had since confessed the conversation—that had the castle of Glindarragh been tenable when the king's troops arrived, on the night of the affray, he would have held it against them, "in the name of that unnatural prodigy—that viper—that, in a measure, parricidal usurper, William of Orange—who, gentlemen of the jury, were he, through the perfidy of the disaffected English colonists, in this ancient kingdom, to force an entrance, and establish his wicked authority here, would, so help me heaven as I believe it, pour out his wrath and vengeance upon the head of every loyal man in the kingdom; nay, punish you, gentlemen, and myself, for calling to account this hoary rebel."

* * * * * * * *

In the old chamber in the Carbrie, meanwhile, sate poor Grace Willoughby—a glass of water on the table, from which she swallowed a little from time to time, with pale and trembling lips, and a sobbing effort to relieve the choking at her throat—a bright feverish flush was on her cheeks, giving to her eyes an unnatural brilliancy, starting up at every sound, straining her sight along the street, to catch the first glimpse of the messenger who came and went to and from the court, bearing to her short notes, which told the progress of the terrible ordeal proceeding there. The last of these lay upon the table, and was couched in these terms:—

"The jury have retired—the judge has charged unfavourably—it is all Tisdal's evidence—a villain. We have hopes, notwithstanding; don't despond, darling. God bless you.

"H. W."

It was now nearly dusk, and still the poor girl gazed from the window; then starting, ran to the door, and held it open, listening in vain for a repetition of the sound which fancy alone had heard; then returning, wringing her hands the while, to the table, and reading again and again, the little note, already a thousand times conned over, in the desperate endeavour to extract from its laconic intimations, some clearer light into the horrible obscurity of her suspense.

At last a step was heard upon the stair. She ran to the door; a servant, pale and haggard, hurried across the lobby; she strove to speak, but could not. The note was in her hand—she read it—one word—gracious God! but one—"GUILTY." For a few dizzy seconds her eye remained fixed upon the terrible word; and then, clapping her hands together, with one wild scream, she fell senseless to the ground.

* * * * * * * *

It was now night, and two gentlemen, in unbounded exultation, were seated at supper in a handsome room in the Carbrie; they were Miles Garrett and Thomas Talbot; they had drunk deeply, and were both somewhat flushed and excited.

"My brother knows how to play his cards, that's all," said Talbot, filling his glass with claret, "and fortune has dealt him a pretty strong hand of trumps, it must be allowed; knowledge, sir, is necessary—granted, but knowledge without opportunity avails nought. Here, for instance, am I," he continued, recklessly—"I dare swear there is not a poor gentleman in Christendom better understands the hard and soft points of human character—from the court to the cabaret; but what avails it, my friends—or the devil made me a priest, *civiliter mortuus*, and for any good my skill can bring me, I might as well be as great a fool as old Willoughby, or as great a brute as yourself."

Garrett knew his companion's rough way, and in a moment of success like this, he could not resent it.

"What say you to a cardinal's hat," suggested Garrett.

"Look me in the face, man, and say how a cardinal's hat would sit upon me," said Talbot, scornfully. "Some attributes for Church preferment I do possess—I allow it. I could drink you, for instance, under the table. I know what's good, and how to help myself, but as there's no promotion to be had without talents of the sort, so there's none to be had either without the talent of hiding these gifts from all but the

Church itself; now I've no fancy for putting my candle under a bushel, and to speak plainly, such is my temper, I would not be Pope, and practice so much restraint. I'm out of my element in this accursed calling; had they made me, instead, a captain of dragoons, I'd have stood as high as my brother by this time, and on far firmer ground to boot; but somehow, when a man gets a title—he wants an heir, and the mischief on it is, an heir must be legitimate, and so, to beget him, you must take a wife—and thus there's an end of your fun; for trust me, I've seen many a gay fellow married, and though they may grin, they seldom smile again! Thus am I better content to live as I do, than if I took a dukedom with all the appurtenances. Fill your glass, Garrett; I've a toast to give you."

They each filled, and Talbot resumed—

"Come, Garrett, let us drink to the fair lady to whom you owe more than to all the sex beside; let's drink, I say, to Lady Willoughby."

Garrett laughed and shrugged, and said—

"She has been, after all, worth something to me, and to you, too, for that matter; but there's a knocking at the door—eh?"

"No—is there?" said Talbot, "well, what are you afraid of?"

"Come in—who's there—come in, I say," said Garrett.

The door opened, and Garvey, with his usual cringing, villainous smile, sneaked in inch by inch.

"Who is that?" asked Talbot drily, after treating Garvey to a full stare of some seconds.

"He's an attorney fellow, and a scrivener," answered Garrett, in a stage whisper.

"Cheap and nasty, I dare affirm," said Talbot, carelessly filling his glass once more, "and well worthy of his client."

"Well, Garvey," said Garrett, somewhat ungraciously, "don't you see, sir, I'm engaged."

"Well! I was not aware, Mr. Garrett; I beg pardon, sir—I crave your pardon gentlemen both."

As Garvey spoke thus, he stood a little behind Talbot, and unobserved by him, he looked in Garrett's eye with a look of impatient significance, and beckoned over his shoulder, toward the door, with his thumb.

I thought you were alone, Mr. Garrett," he continued, in the same humble tone, "and it was my own little account I wanted to say a word about—and if it wouldn't be too bold, I'll ask you, Mr. Garrett, just for a minute to come out to me on the lobby."

"Never mind me, you fool; go with him to the lobby, or to the devil, or where you list, only shut the door," said Talbot, "and don't bring that respectable, grinning, cut-throat, looking gentleman, back again with you—that's all."

Without more ado, Garrett followed Garvey from the apartment, and closing the door, he continued to follow him into another chamber.

"Well!" exclaimed Garrett, looking with inquiring anxiety into the little man's face which, he knew not exactly how, boded something disastrous.

"*Not* well, I'm afraid," he rejoined, "at least, not *so* well as we thought, by half—by no means so smooth a business as we took it for; but who knows—who knows—and all's well that ends well."

"Will you speak out, and leave your riddles; what's wrong?" said Garrett, with an oath and an impatient stamp upon the floor.

"The whole of it is just this then," said Garvey—"the old knight, Sir Hugh Willoughby, has but a life interest in his property."

"A life interest! impossible," cried Garrett aghast, and thoroughly sobered in an instant by the announcement; "do you mean to say that he has no more than a life estate in Glindarragh. Zounds! do you mean to say *that*."

"By my troth I do," rejoined Garvey, "and so it is; if the old knight were hanged to-morrow, his daughter has the fee-simple of Glindarragh, and all the rest by marriage settlement, charged with a jointure to the old lady, so unless you can attaint the women too, you're as far as ever from the old gentleman's acres."

"Why—curse me, its incredible!" ejaculated Garrett, more appalled and bewildered than ever. "I never heard of this settlement, though his wife, to be sure, had a fortune, and true enough, there must have been some settlement in *her* favour; but, hell and death, man! how do you know this—how have you heard it—how do you know it's true; *is* it true?"

"Crooke's confidential clerk has a sneaking regard for me, for one reason or another, no matter," replied Garvey, "and he told me all about it; there is not a doubt of it; the fact is so. I thought it best, Mr. Garrett, not to mention it before your guest."

"You were right—quite right," said Garrett, hastily, and then he paused for two or three minutes. "It wont do—I'm afraid it won't do," he added, anxiously, "but it shall be tried. Garvey, I'll see you in the morning, at my lodgings—I must back again to my friend."

And so saying, with a changed mien, and a fallen countenance, he retraced his steps; he paused on the lobby for a minute to recover his looks, which he felt were troubled and disconcerted.

"I've one shot left in the locker, at all events," he muttered, "and if *it* tells, why then, what care I. I have all I want without their help—and as for Talbot—why, in that case, I can whistle him off to the devil, who owns him, and dare his worst. Come, come, all's not lost yet."

He placed his hand upon the latch, and in another moment he and Talbot were once more seated together as we found them.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CELL AND THE RIVALS—THE BROKEN CANE AND A LAST CHANCE FOR LIFE.

The evening of the following day had consigned Sir Hugh to a chamber in the Birmingham tower, then the usual state prison, and one of the gloomiest in the old Castle of Dublin. A small apartment, of irregular shape, overspanned by a dusky low arch of stone; a single narrow grated window, scarcely large enough to admit a man's head, and close to the vaulted ceiling, grudgingly lighted the dismal apartment; two or three rude pieces of the commonest furniture, thinly occupied the bare stone floor; a truckle bed, little better than a mat, lay in the corner; a dark festoonery of cobwebs waved in the sluggish air, and the low and narrow aperture which gave admission to the room, was occupied by a ponderous door of oak, so studded with nails and screws, and crossed and embedded with rusty bars, that scarce an inch of the timber was any where apparent. Two figures occupied the room; they were those of the old knight and his fair daughter; he so broken, so furrowed with the lines of age and care, but withal, so majestic in his feebleness and humiliation—she so beautiful, yet so sad, that they might have meetly represented Time and Sorrow, in their sad companionship.

"This extremity," continued the old man, pursuing the current of his melancholy discourse, "would cost me, broken and humbled as I am, scarce a sigh, were it not—were it not," he repeated with an accert as though his heart were breaking, "my pretty Grace, for thee; who will guard thee and guide thee through these terrible times, my gentle, loving child?"

A rude noise at the entrance interrupted him—the bars gave way successively—the door swung open, and Miles Garrett entered. He had obviously not expected to see the girl there, for he looked surprized and disconcerted, and for a moment hesitated as if he would have retired; the dogged and forbidding aspect which he had at first worn, however speedily returned, with, perhaps, the more sinister darkness by reason of the effort it cost him to master his strange agitation.

Sir Hugh turned haughtily from him, without rising or speaking a word, and drew his daughter still closer to his side. Miles Garrett took off his hat, then dashed it on again, and glanced with an uncertain look from one to the other; at last he spoke, but not until he had twice or thrice essayed in vain; and when, clearing his husky voice, he did succeed at length, it was with an appearance of something between shame and anger at his own weakness.

"Cousin Willoughby," he said, gruffly, "you see how it has gone. I told you so—you would not believe me—but who was right?"

"What do you seek here—what can you want with me?" asked Sir Hugh, without looking toward him, and speaking in a tone of subdued sternness.

"Look ye, Cousin Hugh—I don't mean to make professions of friendship; you refused my offers, and I was vexed, spited—what you will," said he, growing more fluent as he proceeded. "I have let matters take their course hitherto—I have not interposed my interest to protect you—I have stood neutral. Now, mark me, Cousin Hugh—I speak advisedly, perhaps—*perhaps*, I say, it is not *yet* too late."

"Words—words—words," muttered the old knight, softly, as he looked down upon his irons with a bitter smile.

"Yes, words, and deeds to match them," said Garrett, with sudden sternness, "that was *my* way from a boy, and that being so, my words are well worth weighing. You think it is too late for help; I say it is *not*, and the result will prove it."

He paused, but the old man deigned not the slightest answer to his words.

"This is an extremity of sore and urgent peril—while there's life there's hope, the proverb says; but life once gone, it is gone indeed," he pursued, addressing himself for the first time to the girl; "he lies under sentence—the sword is suspended over him; it may fall tomorrow—it may fall *now;* the step of the dreadful messenger, even while I speak, may be upon the stair."

With a mute gesture of agony and despair, the poor girl wildly clasped her hands upon her temples.

"Yet he may be saved—I am sure he may. *I* can save him!" said Garrett, deliberately.

There was a breathless pause of a few seconds.

"I *will* save him," pursued Garrett, vehemently, and then added, dashing his hand upon the table; "but if I do, you—*you* must marry me."

Sir Hugh rose slowly from his seat, and drew his daughter back, with something like a shudder, as he gazed silently upon Garrett, with a look in which horror and astonishment were blended.

"God forbid—God, in his mercy, forbid," he muttered, still drawing his child further back, as if he dreaded even the contagion of his looks.

"Enough!" cried Garrett, ferociously looking from the frightened girl, to the indignant countenance of the old knight, and reading, at a glance, the hopelessness of his proposal; "you have had your last offer—your last chance; fortune shall run her own course with you now—you to the gibbet, and you to the streets. You'll not be the first of your blood that has come to shame."

And with a brutal laugh of spite, he shook his hand at the affrighted girl, then turned on his heel, and strode out of the room, white and trembling with rage, which his affected carelessness in vain essayed to conceal.

The last words of the wretch smote like a deathblow upon the brain and the heart of the old man. He stood speechless and stunned for a moment, and then a convulsive burst of sobs relieved him, and burying his face in his hands, he sank into his seat.

Meanwhile, along the footway leading from the Cork Tower toward the Birmingham Tower, upon the broad platform of the Castle wall, a dark-visaged, handsome dragoon, his face pale, and his eyes bright with rage, was pacing swiftly.

"Traced home to him—the wretch!" muttered Torlogh O'Brien—for he was the soldier who thus strode along the Castle wall—with bitter distinctness, muttering his suppressed invectives through his set teeth; "that I should be made the sport of his murderous craft, practised upon by fraud, and made, unconsciously, to lend myself to such an accursed conspiracy. I could have saved that fine old man; my testimony would have made it *impossible* to find him guilty; and now, I fear, he is, indeed, lost—irrecoverably lost! But ha! who's that?—by heaven, the murderer!"

With a flushed and stormy countenance, Miles Garrett was just ascending the last step of the long stone flight which led up from the Castle yard to the elevated pathway which Torlogh O'Brien trod. As he reached the same level, these two persons confronted one another, at an interval of less than half a dozen paces.

Torlogh O'Brien paused; light and firm he stood upon his graceful limbs—and scornfully shook back his glittering showers of black hair, from his still, bronzed features, as he awaited the shambling approach of the ugly and repulsive personage who strode listlessly towards him.

"How comes this, Mr. Garrett?" exclaimed Torlogh, sternly, extending a letter toward the astonished magistrate; "you undertook, sir, to forward this letter to me; you knew, that in all probability, a human life depended upon its reaching me in time; and knowing this, you deliberately held it back for two whole days, and let me have it at last too late; explain this, sir, if you can."

"You've got your letter, young sir—early or late is no affair of mine," rejoined Garrett, sturdily; "I've neither time nor temper for further questions; and don't imagine, for all your scarlet and gold, that I'll be hectored here by you; move aside, and let me pass."

"Treacherous coward, and ruffian," retorted Torlogh, incensed at the tone of insolent superiority with which he attempted to carry off his villainy.

"Coward and ruffian, in your teeth, you scarlet popinjay," thundered Garrett, with a sudden burst of ungovernable fury; "and liar and bully to the back of it. I owe you an old score—and, 'fore God, I'll clear it."

Garrett raised his cane, threateningly, as he spoke, and strode forward. Perhaps the gesture was one merely of preparation or menace; be that as it may, it had the effect of precipitating the physical collision which it seemed to portend; for Torlogh instantly grasped it, and a hot and furious struggle ensued. Three or four seconds, however, determined its issue: the young dragoon, decidedly the more active of the two, forced his antagonist against the low parapet of the wall, and exerting his whole weight and strength, forced his body so far over it, that he had lost his balance; and after a few ineffectual struggles to catch by the edge of the battlement, tumbled backward headlong into the fosse, which, at that side, was swamped by the river, and presented a broad, mantling cess-pool of mud and sludge. Filthy, stunned, and thoroughly drenched in inky slime, without hat or wig, Miles Garrett ploughed and floundered to the other side; greeted all the way by the hootings and jeers of the idle spectators.

"Ye come down to us, did you?" said one.

"Why, then, the top iv the mornin' to you," exclaimed another.

"Your wig and your hat's comin' afther you, with the sarvints, I suppose?" suggested a third.

"Oh, but's himself that's butthered all over," ejaculated a fourth.

"He's the sign of the 'Black Swan' all over, bedad."

These, and a thousand other pleasantries, enlivened his efforts to mount the bank, which, at last, he did, half blind with his bath, and giddy with rage.

Meanwhile, having just glanced after his discomfited antagonist, and flung his broken cane after him, without waiting to see the issue of the adventure, Torlogh O'Brien descended the steps which Garrett had so lately mounted; and re-adjusting the disorder of his dress as he proceeded, he made his way directly to the Birmingham tower, where, as we have said, Sir Hugh Willoughby was confined.

With little difficulty or delay, he gained admission to the tower. With feelings strangely agitated and conflicting, he silently ascended the steep dark stairs. The hoarse lock screamed—the bars groaned and clanged—the door rolled open, and Torlogh O'Brien stood before Sir Hugh Willoughby. When the brave young soldier looked upon the old man, whom, spite of the untoward circumstances which made their fortunes, as it seemed, irreconcileably opposed, he could not help liking and admiring—when he beheld him thus rigorously a prisoner—when he saw the irons on his limbs, pity and indignation thrilled him; and a rush, almost of tenderness, on a sudden overpowered his softened heart.

For the first time in his life, he grasped the old man's hands, and wrung them again and again in the warm pressure of unrestrained and generous feeling.

"Sir Hugh—Sir Hugh," he cried; "I did not look to find you thus; you are wronged—you are greatly wronged. 'Fore heaven this must be righted; you shall not lose your life—you shall not perish; there shall be no cruelty, no sacrifice, no judicial murder. Great God! this is a crying sin—a shame, a burning shame; my heart swells at the sight of these irons."

"My good friend," said Sir Hugh, returning his grasp as warmly—"for friend I may, and will call you—grieve not for this—it cannot be mended now; and when all's done, 'tis but a few years, at most, taken from the end of an old—a very old life; although——"

He was going to have added somewhat, but he sighed bitterly, and became silent.

"No, no, no—it shall not be," cried Torlogh, passionately; "there has been foul play here; the king shall hear of it—you shall have justice—you shall not be wronged—you shall not be *murdered*; I will lose my life first. Let us think of all means—let us try everything; something must be done, one way or another. You shall be saved, cost what it may—you shall not die."

He turned and looked upon the young lady with a gaze of undisguised pity and admiration; and was there not—or was it fancy—in its quenched and melancholy fires, something of a deeper, and still tenderer passion? It seemed as though he was upon the very point of speaking, but some secret influence sealed his lips.

"My poor child has prayed me to suffer her to speak with the king for me," said Sir Hugh, looking upon her with a faint smile of fondness and melancholy.

"It is wisely thought, Sir Hugh; she may succeed; at least, it is worth a trial," said Torlogh, earnestly.

"You hear what he says, dear father," said she, with joyful confidence; "let me go and speak with the king; and God may give me words and wisdom to prevail."

So speaking, she rose up with a bright eye, and a pale and solemn face.

"Nay," said Sir Hugh, dejectedly; "it were but a vain endeavour. The spirit in which I have been pursued has been that of uncompromising severity; I have no friends near the king—but, as I have too much reason to believe, many malignant, though, God knows, most unprovoked enemies. What chance, therefore, has this poor child of moving the king's purpose, and softening resolutions so stern and inflexible?"

"Let it be tried, however," urged Torlogh.

"It were but to show a cowardly love of life, ill befitting an old man and a brave one," responded Sir Hugh; "it were but adding needless humiliation and shame, to misfortunes which have brought me low enough already."

"Yet, suffer the young lady to make the attempt," pursued Torlogh; "I implore of you—I conjure you to permit her."

The old man heaved a heavy sigh, and answered not.

"Suffer her to go, Sir Hugh; it may be that the wisdom and the mercy of heaven have inspired this thought; oppose it not," continued Torlogh; "and I, if the prayer be not too bold a one—I will entreat, in all humbleness, of the lady, to allow me to attend her steps, and render whatever service my poor ability can offer. Command me to the uttermost—I shall be but too happy, too proud to obey."

The lady lowered her lustrous eyes, and a faint tinge warmed her pale cheek. With a beautiful struggle of embarrassment and gratification, she murmured her low sweet thanks for his fervent proffers

"This is about the hour," continued Torlogh, "when the king usually walks in the Castle garden; if it seem well to you, let the attempt be made *now*. I will endeavour to procure admission for you, and you will then see his majesty face to face, without fear of interruption, and free to listen to your supplication. Let us then, if it be your pleasure, go at once; and, in God's name, try whether you can now prevail with him."

"You will meet but a cold hearing and a stern judge, my poor Grace," said her father, slowly shaking his head; "nevertheless, as you desire it still, in God's name, as you say, so be it, go and try. Here," he added, as he selected a paper from among several which lay upon the rude table beside him; "here, my poor child, is the paper—place it in the king's hand, as you desire; but I warn you, be not sanguine—for, calmly viewed, the project is indeed but a hopeless one."

With a countenance, in which hope contended with awe, the pale girl calmly arose, and did on her simple cloak and hood in silence; then kissing her father fondly and sadly, with a lofty, and serene, and mournful mien, she passed from the chamber, followed closely by Torlogh O'Brien. The official outside the door closed it with a heavy swing, and Grace was now fairly committed to her agitating enterprize.

CHAPTER XXXI.

KING JAMES IN THE CASTLE GARDEN.

Close under the further curtain of the Castle, lay the formal garden, in which it was King James' wont, during his anxious sojourn in his Irish capital, to take the air, for at least an hour every day.

Across the quadrangle of the old Castle, did Torlogh O'Brien, with his plumed hat in his hand, respectfully conduct the beautiful and silent lady. He led the way into the doorway of a small round tower, one of two which occupied the wall between the Birmingham and the Wardrobe towers. A sour-looking hag of some seventy winters, seated upon a stool in a far recess, was at first scarcely visible in the imperfect light of the stone-vaulted chamber, as she busily plied her distaff, and chanted with an ill-omened croak, from time to time, a snatch of some old Milesian ballad. As the two youthful visitants entered this grim and darksome abode, the crone raised her shrivelled yellow arm, and with her smoke-dried fingers, swept back the straggling long white locks, peering at them with an expression which was anything but inviting.

"Is Nial in the tower, good dame?" asked Torlogh.

"Is Nial in the tower?" she repeated deliberately, to allow herself full time to reconnoitre; "no, he isn't—sure he's never where he ought to be—the *sturk*, and why ud he be here? Nial, indeed!—aye—aye! if its Nial you want, you better go down the back lanes, an' hunt through the shebeen shops, for its little his ould mother sees iv him."

The latter part of this harangue was delivered in the way of a discontented soliloquy, and sunk into an inarticulate grumble at the close—and so she pursued her task, as though she had wholly forgotten their presence.

"Well, honest dame," said Torlogh, endeavouring, by a gentle address, to conciliate the wayward hag—"though Nial is not at home, I dare say the keys are, and if so, you will do us a great kindness by allowing us to pass into the garden."

"Into the garden, is it? Why then, an' id nothing else sarve you but into the garden itself," she ejaculated, with all the arrogance of office, as she surveyed them both with a half contemptuous leer. "Why then, yez id look well, an' the king himself, God bless him, there this minute; maybe its to walk with himself yez want—well, but that's impitence, in airnest."

"Nay, madam—we may desire to see the king, and even to speak with him, and yet be guilty of no audacity," said Torlogh, half amused, in spite of his anxiety, at the old woman's official insolence; "and even such is the truth—this young lady has a message of life and death to deliver to his majesty. I pray you do us so much kindness as to turn the key in the lock, and suffer us to enter. I will bear you harmless against all consequences—and," he added, stooping over her, and placing a gold piece in her hand as he spoke, "and reward you for your pains."

"Well, well acushla, stop a bit," said she, in a softened tone, as she deposited the coin in her withered breast; "ax me whatever you plase, an' I'll not refuse you anything in raison, barrin' letting you into the garden, for that's a thing I wouldn't do for the holy Saint Ghost, let alone a sinful young dhragoon like yourself; take a pinch iv the snishin, an' ax anything but that alone."

She extended a horn snuff-box, as she spoke, and fearful of offending her, Torlogh thanked her, and affected to partake of its contents.

"Well, then," said he, "if you will not allow us both to enter, at least admit this lady."

"Nansense!" cried she, "is not it all one—I said I wouldn't, an' I'm not goin' back iv my word. No—no—I know what it is to crass a proud gintleman like the king. My husband, God rest him—an' glory be his bed—went again General Cromwell once. They called him bloody Cromwell, an' he had the look iv it—glory be to God—in his face—for I never seen him but my heart riz into my mouth. There was some powdher in the store-house tower, over the way, and the general ordhered how that no one should smoke a pipe iv tobaccy within the two cannons that was outside iv it—an' my husband, the saints resave him, poor Connor—he was an aisy goin', good natured boy—he was so—and mainin' no harm himself, never throubled his head with dhramin' any one else meant mischief neither; an' the dear man, sure enough, he was smokin' his pipe, quiet an' aisy, serenadin' along, right between the two cannons, an' he feels a walkin' cane just laid on his shouldher; so when he looked round, who id be in it but the gineral himself, an' he was so bothered, that he stood lookin' at him just like a fool, all as one; an' Gineral Cromwell just puts out his hand this a way, an' he takes the pipe out iv his mouth, an', says he, 'Clap your thumb in the bowl iv it, friend, an' walk before me to the gate-house.' Them was his very words, an' poor Connor dar'n't say boo, for there never was the thing yet, barrin' the divil maybe, dar' crass him—so he stuck his thumb in the pipe, an' he was so freckened, he hardly felt it, though it burnt him a'most to the bone, an' he walks before him to the guard-room at the draw-bridge, an' he gave him in charge iv the officer, an' says he, 'Bring out a file an' shoot him at eight o'clock to-morrow mornin', for there must be an end of smokin' so near my powdher;' an' as sure as you're standin' there, he'd have shot him dead the next mornin', only for ould Sir Charles Coote that knew him, an' begged his life; but he lost his place, an' for twelve years we wor out iv the Castle, and a sore time we had iv it—an' it's that that makes me guarded ever since iv goin' against great men, even in thrifles, do ye mind."

As she thus spoke, a key was turned in the door communicating with the garden; it opened, and a tall, striking-looking officer entered from the garden; it was Colonel Sarsfield.

"Ha, O'Brien!" said he, gaily glancing from him to the cloaked form of the girl—"why, what a romantic tableau!—a youthful warrior—a distressed damsel—and something very like a fell enchantress in the background of this sombre tower; prithee, what part is reserved for me—giant or ——?"

"Nay, deliverer," said Torlogh, "for unless you enact that part, I fear me the adventure must stand still for lack of it."

And so saying, he drew him aside, and spoke earnestly with him for a few minutes, during which time Sarsfield's countenance grew grave, and he several times glanced with apparent interest at the form of the young lady.

"Certainly," said he; "but take my advice and let the lady go alone his majesty's respect for the sex will insure her a more courteous hearing, if not a more favourable one, than, perhaps, you or I could hope for."

Grace thanked him hurriedly, but earnestly, said she would follow his advice, and go alone; and passing through the narrow portal which he held open with one hand, while with the other he gracefully raised his military hat—she found herself within the tall close hedges, and darksome alleys of the formal garden. She walked on slowly to recover completely her self-possession, and to prepare herself as well as she might, for the agitating interview which was now at hand. She thus passed through the length of the garden, without encountering any living thing, and in like manner through another alley, with its stately statues, showing in classic relief against the deep shadows of the straight yew hedge; as she drew near the corner of this, she felt convinced she should, on turning it, behold the object of her search—and the suspense of that moment so overwhelmed her, that she could scarce summon resolution to pass the angle of the closely shaded walk. She speedily mastered her agitation, however, and drawing a long, deep sigh, like one about to plunge into an unfathomed and perilous sea, she passed onward and entered the long walk; a single glance down its long perspective sufficed to assure her that her anticipations had not misled her. From the further extremity two figures were slowly advancing toward her. One was that of the king, plainly dressed, and leaning upon a cane; the other was that of a younger man, attired in a suit of black cloth; they seemed to be communing earnestly, for they often stopped and faced one another, and thus pursuing their desultory ramble, they slowly approached the spot where she stood.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ANSWER.

It was not until they had nearly reached the statue by which she had taken her stand, that the king became aware of her presence.

"Whom have we here?" he said, with good humoured surprize, as he paused within a few paces of the girl, and gazed with some curiosity, and obviously not a little admiration upon her; "*par ma foi c'est une jolie fille*," he continued, looking toward his grave companion, who had lowered his eyes demurely to the ground. The king turned his gaze again full upon the shrinking girl, with that bold look of undisguised admiration which had earned for him, in his earlier days, the reputation of being the most conspicuous ogler at court; "by my word, good father, I incline to think the true divinity hath descended in person to shame these counterfeit graces of lead and stone, and tempt me from your colder orthodoxy, into the charming follies of the antique worship."

"What say you, father—are you, too, a proselyte. he added, gaily, laying his cane upon his companion's shoulder—"are you, too, in danger?"

Father Petre answered not, but lowered his head, it might be about an inch more, with an almost imperceptible shake of grave disapprobation.

"My liege," said the girl, while the colour which his bold criticism had called to her cheek again retired, leaving her features almost as pale as marble, and at the same time approaching and extending a folded paper in her hands, "if your majesty will graciously be pleased to read this petition, you will learn briefly the subject of my humble supplication."

James removed his glove gallantly, and taking the paper in his finger and thumb, held it up, and waved it warningly at her with a smile as he said—

"I see how it is, I would stake my life on't—a place for a clever young fellow who needs but experience to turn out a capital financier; or, let us say, rather a commission for a brave gentleman, who asks but opportunity to prove a hero and a general? What say you, father, have we read aright our fair petitioner's memorial in her eyes?"

"My liege, it is no such matter," she began.

"By my faith, then, we are at fault," said the king, raising his eyebrows, and good humouredly shaking his head; "you have baulked our penetration, and for a penance, we will have thee open the matter to us by word of mouth."

"I will do so, may it please your majesty," said the girl, spiritedly. "I am the daughter—the only child of Sir Hugh Willoughby, a true subject of your majesty, accused of treason by false witnesses, and now condemned to die."

The king's face darkened ominously as she spoke, and he interrupted her by saying coldly—

"We will read the paper—we will read it."

James walked slowly away, as he deliberately unfolded the petition, and paused, while he read it; then walked on a pace or two further, and read a little more.

In all the sickening uncertainty of suspense, meanwhile, did poor Grace Willoughby watch his movements, striving to read in every look and gesture some ground of hope. James had walked some twenty yards away, in this desultory and broken fashion, when, at length, he turned to the Jesuit who accompanied him, and placing his arm within his companion's, continued to walk down the trim alley, evidently conversing upon the topic which was, at that moment, making the heart of the poor girl flutter and throb, as though its pulsations would choke her. She saw them again pause, while the king read the petition through, and while he was thus employed, to her extreme dismay, the Duke of Tyrconnel entered the walk, and with the suavity of a courtier, and the confidence of a favourite, approached his royal benefactor.

They stopped and conversed together, in a little knot, at the far extremity of the terrace. The king handed the paper to Tyrconnel, who returned it, with a brief remark or two, and James having said a few words more, folded it, and coolly placed it in his pocket.

"It is decided now, one way or other," exclaimed the poor girl, as she watched, with an intensity of suspense little short of agony, the proceedings of the little group. "God grant it may be favourably. Oh, yes! yes—it must be so—for see, they are laughing; thank God—thank God—they could not, I think they could not laugh so pleasantly, were it otherwise."

Her agitation was so extreme, that she was on the point of hurrying to the spot where the king was standing, to hear, at once, his answer to her prayer. She feared, however, that the least precipitation might be construed into a want of due respect, and so perhaps fatally prejudice her suit; and rather than encounter, even in imagination, a risk so tremendous, she waited patiently where she stood, until the king, in his own good time, might please to release her from the anguish of her doubts. Unhappily for her, James appeared now to have fallen upon a subject, which peculiarly interested him, for his gestures became more animated, and he drew, in illustration of the matter of his discourse, a sort of diagram with his walking cane, upon the gravel walk, and lectured thereupon, with a good deal of emphasis—pointing from time to time to different parts of his tracing, while his two companions listened with real or affected interest, and occasionally dropped a question, or remark, which furnished the king with new matter of discussion. Nearly ten minutes had elapsed ere the poor girl saw them approach so near that she was now able to overhear what passed.

"It was not exactly so," said the king, again stopping short, "though pretty nearly so: 'tis easily explained. Opdam lay to our leeward, within half-musket shot, as it might be, there. I was standing at the moment, by the bulwark, on the quarter-deck, as thus—and had just raised my glass; Muskerry stood, as it might be so, where you, Talbot, now stand; Falmouth scarce a step behind—as it might be, *there*, where you are, father; and Mr. Boyle, some pretty distance backward, not three steps from the binnacle; all happening, thus, in the same line—at which moment came the enemy's shot, and killed those three brave gentlemen; the ball, as I calculated, must have passed some four, perhaps five inches less than two feet from my shoulder."

"I've heard it reckoned, by those who had the honour to serve on board with your majesty," said Tyrconnel, "at something less than a single foot."

"I will not be positive," said the king, evidently not displeased at the suggestive correction; "I will venture to aver, however, the distance was not *more* than I have said."

"'Tis such narratives," said Father Petre, with a shake of the head, and a well acted shudder, "which realize to us, timid sons of peace, the true dangers and terrors of battle; one such escape, methinks, might find a man gravity and caution for the remainder of his days."

"Tut, tut, father," said James, gaily, but withal proudly, "'tis but the fortune of war, and a sailor who has been in a few hot fights, if he be fit for his calling, will witness such casualties as coolly as he would the shooting away of a spar, or the cutting of a shroud; not indeed," he added, in a graver tone, and crossing himself with an expression of devotion, in which, it must be confessed, a very obvious irradiation of vanity still lingered—"not but that a good Catholic, wherever he be, will, in all deliverances, look up with gratitude and love to Almighty God, and to his blessed saints. But, by my faith, we had clean forgotten the matter of this petition of Sir Hugh Willoughby's," he said, abruptly breaking off, as his eye chanced to encounter the form of Grace Willoughby, who now stood close by him.

He took the paper from his coat pocket, along with a pocket-book, in which, with a pencil, he seemed to take a note of its contents, and, after folding it up again, with a few brief remarks, he advanced slowly toward the poor girl, with a look of dark and haughty severity in his face, which ominously contrasted with the gaiety and affability with which he had accosted her before. "We have read the petition, young lady," he said, with cold gravity, "which you have given into our hand, praying that we would extend our royal clemency to your unhappy father, Sir Hugh Willoughby; it is a bold prayer, considering, alike, the straits and troubles of these times, and the nature of the crime of which he stands convicted; and yet, so far from wishing him, or any other of our subjects ill—there lives not that soul, even among the greatest and most unnatural of our enemies, against whom we harbour, so God be our stead, the least malice or revenge; and were we merely to consult the promptings of our own heart, we would, indeed, rather say to all our rebellious subjects (and God wot they are many), live and repent, than die in your iniquity; but alas! it is not with governors and rulers, as with other men; the safety of the body politic, and the discipline of the national manners, good government, law, subordination, peace, and prosperity, all hang upon the acts and words of kings; and what might be gentleness and mercy in common men, would be but weakness, nay, criminality in them; and, as the king is the anointed of God Almighty, and, by him, consecrated to his high office, it beseems him, as God's chief magistrate on earth, in distributing his judgments, to have a strict regard to that spirit in which the Almighty administers his own, namely, for a warning and prevention; by the terrors of occasional punishment, to coerce the ill-disposed into the ways of peace and honesty; this is as much the duty of the king, as to forgive. Wherefore, and considering all the attending circumstances, we are obliged to refuse this prayer, and, in your father's case, to suffer the law to take its usual course."

James spoke this formal, and, to the poor girl, most terrible address, with much gravity, and discreet emphasis—but withal, as phlegmatically, as though it were no more than a mere lecture upon the abstract question of divine right and royal prerogative; and, having concluded, he was turning coldly away, when she cried in a tone of sudden and thrilling agony—

"Stay—my liege—in the name of God—I conjure you—stay and hear me."

The king turned upon her, once more, the same forbidding look of cold displeasure.

"Young woman," interposed Tyrconnel imperiously—"'tis neither seemly nor respectful thus to importune his majesty; do you not see—can you not perceive this urgency is unbefitting—not to say indecent?"

"Nay," said the king, waving his hand backward in gentle reproof; "if the young lady has any matter to urge, as yet undisclosed to us—and pertinent to this petition—God forbid we should turn from her, and refuse a hearing. Proceed, then," he continued, turning again toward her—"if there be any matter of fact or argument omitted *here*," and he tapped the paper which he had just perused; "let us have it, i' God's name, and speedily."

"My liege," she said, "I am unskilled in argument—take pity on me—I can but pray for mercy. Oh, my liege, hear me, pleading for *my* father; and in your own troubles, may God incline your children to plead for you—"

"His majesty has already restricted you, young lady, to arguments and facts," interrupted Tyrconnel, who dreaded the effect of an allusion to his children—the only topic by which, through selfish channels enough, it must be confessed, the heart of the king was easily assailable; "you are but wasting his majesty's time and patience, in thus recurring to mere importunity."

"He speaks the truth," said the king; "we desire to know, simply, whether you have any new matter to add to that stated in this paper. We have conceded much in suffering this irregular intrusion thus far; we cannot consent to be detained by mere solicitation."

"My liege," she continued, with imploring earnestness; "the great God, the King of kings, the Judge of all the earth—before whom, at the last day, you and he shall stand to receive your everlasting doom—He knows that he is entirely innocent of this crime. My liege, my liege, have mercy—and may your judge be merciful to you—"

The king turned petulantly from her as she spoke; and in the wildness of her agony she threw herself upon her knees before him.

"For pity's sake—for God's sake," she cried, almost frantically; "consider—think; it is innocent blood they seek to shed—the innocent blood that cries up before the throne of God for vengeance. My Lord Tyrconnel—good priest—oh, sirs, speak for me, he will hear you—"

"Tyrconnel raised his eyes, and Father Petre lowered his meekly; and at the same moment the king interrupted the girl's melancholy appeal by saying, curtly—

"It can not be—once for all, young lady, we tell you, it can not be; and desire you plainly, to take your answer."

"Oh! no, no, no, my liege—for pity's sake," cried the poor girl distractedly.

"Nay, damsel, this is scarce seemly," said the king, peremptorily, and, at the same time, disengaging the skirt of his coat, which in her agony she had grasped, "and only to be excused on the score of your unripe experience. We decide *no* matter with undue haste, and, having decided once, and upon sufficient reasons, we do not lightly change; it is determined in this case, the law shall take its course—and, if we urge not the execution of the sentence on an early day, we expect not to be troubled for our forbearance."

The king turned austerely away, and terrified by the dreadful threat faintly implied in his closing sentence, she made no further effort to detain him.

Heart-sick and trembling, she followed him and his companions, with her eyes, as they slowly passed onward upon the broad walk which formed the royal promenade, and marked their careless gestures and easy laughter, as they renewed their light conversation; and then, scarce knowing whither she went, she turned in the opposite direction, and finding herself, after a few minutes, alone, in a sequestered alley, she sate herself down upon a block of stone, under the shadow of the dark evergreens, and found relief in a burst of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SWEET WORDS AND TEARS AND WILD FLOWERS.

We left Grace Willoughby seated mournfully in the Castle garden, in a lonely alley, among the trim dark yews. She had dried her tears, and was sitting dejectedly, with drooping head, and clasped hands, upon the rude mossgrown fragment of rock, which she had chosen for her seat, when she was recalled from her reverie, by a deep, manly voice, close beside her.

"I have been seeking you," said Torlogh O'Brien, for he was the speaker—"I have been seeking you, Mistress Grace Willoughby, and grieve to find you thus sorrowful; it is, then, as we feared, the king has rejected your suit."

"He has rejected it," said poor Grace, in a tone so piteous, that it touched the young soldier's heart. "Ah, what shall I do now? I fear—I greatly fear it is all over."

"Nay," said Torlogh, in a tone that was almost tender—"do not despair—it is but a first defeat—and many resources remain yet untried. I have friends—powerful friends—all their interest and my own—every influence that I command—shall be to the uttermost exerted."

She looked up to thank him, and, as her eyes encountered his ardent gaze, they dropped again, and, instead of speaking, she blushed, and every moment more and more deeply.

"You have too long misunderstood me, Mistress Grace," he continued, in the same ardent and melancholy tone, and, at the same time, seating himself upon the high bank beside her, that his softened voice might distinctly reach her—"a descendant, the last, it may be, of an ancient and unfortunate house—referring their outcast and ruined fortunes, in some sort, to the deeds and daring of your ancestors. Nay, I will say it—educated, as I have been, in abhorrence of your race—I came hither with a heart charged with wrath and vengeance against your family—full of the darkest passions of that ancient feud; but—all—all that is changed now."

As the sweet and melancholy tones of the young man's voice fell upon her ear, her head was turned a little away; but he saw that she blushed and trembled more and more every moment—while her white fingers, straying among the moss and grass, unconsciously plucked the wild flowers that grew beside her.

"It is, indeed, all changed," he continued, passionately—"changed, almost from the moment when I saw you first. You must not be angry with me—you are not angry. I cannot—cannot refrain from speaking; having spoken so far, I must speak all. From the time I saw you first, you have haunted me in my waking thoughts, spite of all my struggles, and in my dreams—you have been alone all the joy, and all the sorrow of my existence. Yes, dear, *dear* Grace, I do, passionately, with my whole heart, fondly love you."

He had taken her hand, and held it fervently, while her colour shifted momentarily from deadly pale to glowing crimson. She attempted to withdraw it, and arose, while a thousand thousand thrilling thoughts and emotions were crowded into that brief interval of silence; and still holding her hand, while his cheek—that cheek which had never blanched for all the terrors of battle, was pale as death—he passionately pursued his impetuous discourse:—

"Yes, I love you, dear, dear Grace—I love you, as you will never meet another capable of loving you again; as *I* have loved but once, and never, never can love more—nay, do not, do not turn away—nay, suffer me to hold your dear hand for this brief minute; the first time—it may be for the last time—in my life. Hear me thus, then, tell you how I love you—even though the tale be told in vain; and say dearest, ah, say if you can ever—dare I hope it—ever, ever love me in return."

As he concluded, she withdrew her hand. Such were the confusion and the tumult of her feelings, that she dared not, and could not frame an answer; but one look in her pale face told him truly he was beloved again. He took her cold, trembling, little hand once more; he held it fondly—for she now did not draw it away—but she tried once more to speak; and, instead of speaking—poor, pretty Grace—she fainted away.

Unmoving, unconscious, the loved burthen lay in his arms; and as he looked in her pale face, and saw the colour returning, Torlogh O'Brien had never known what it was to be really proud and happy before.

"Is it—is it all a dream?" at length she softly said.

"No, dearest, no," he said as softly, but with most passionate tenderness; "no dream—no illusion—but truth—reality—to me the proudest and the brightest that has ever been. Look, dearest, look up into my face—it is I, Torlogh, your lover—I who stand beside you—

Torlogh O'Brien, your own true lover, who would rather lose a thousand lives, than this dear hand—ay, who would rather perish where he stands, than forget even one sweet look of yours."

As he thus spoke, her full heart at last found relief, and the bright tears gathered in her downcast eyes, and fell softly and silently among the wild flowers in her lap.

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How absorbing was the proud, unutterable rapture of that minute—how unlooked for, through the desolate darkness of that hour, shone out this sudden, tender gleam of deepest happiness. Like an unexpected, momentary glow of evening sun, breaking through a sky of storm, and pouring its radiance through wet leaves and drooping boughs; where, as the eye wanders, lost in the clear perspective of the opening glades, the birds sing sweetly, and flowers shimmer bright, as though they had never been overcast by the terrors and the gloom of tempest. Thus, for a moment, in the thrilling joy of that happy, happy interview, were forgotten the troubles, the fears, the agonies of the hour before.

But, perchance, we have already tarried too long over these gentle passages of love; it is after all but a cold task, recording scenes like these. Words will not do it, because no words spoken in such moments, ever yet equalled the heart's emotions, from which they sprung—feelings which are, indeed, unutterable—which eyes and tones may tell, but common language never. What more was told by words and looks in that sweet, passionate conference, it were idle to record: suffice it to say, that when they arose to depart, they had exchanged the mutual troth of lovers.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MESSENGER.

Meanwhile, in his gloomy chamber, Sir Hugh was not alone. His faithful agent, Caleb Crooke, sate with him: deep and anxious was their consultation.

"It is important—most important," said the attorney, toward the close of their conference; "that the deed of settlement should be placed safely in my hands. It is the only security—the only provision your poor child possesses. Should these villains, whom I suspect to be at the bottom of your prosecution, urge their victory to its murderous issue, this document secures your daughter against spoliation"—and as he spoke, he wrung his old patron's hand—"God grant—God, in his mercy, grant it may not be so—but it is ever safest to look at the worst aspect of affairs, and guard not only against what is probable, but what is possible, too. The deed is now in Glindarragh; can you say exactly where?"

"Yes, the very spot," said Sir Hugh; "but how to get a bold and trusty messenger——"

"Ay, there's the difficulty," said Crooke, thoughtfully; "and bold and trusty must he be, in times like these, to whom I would commit so anxious and so grave an errand."

"Hush—whom have we here?" interrupted the old knight. "Ha, my poor girl," he continued, fondly, but at the same time, bitterly, as his daughter, followed by Torlogh O'Brien, entered the sombre chamber; "I see full well how you have sped—even as I predicted. Put not your trust in princes, my child; there is One, and but One, to whom we may look with confidence, even in the worst of troubles. He can deliver me, if it be his good will, though all the powers of this world were leagued against me; and without the shield of his protection, with kings and armies on our side, we are not safe. Therefore, upon the God of all might and all mercy, in this sore extremity, I only and entirely rely."

Too much agitated and embarrassed to speak, Grace remained silent; but Torlogh O'Brien, in a few brief sentences, put Sir Hugh and his companion in full possession of the result of the young lady's mission; and, this done, once more their deliberations turned upon the important document, and the choice of a trusty messenger.

"Would I could offer my services," said Torlogh; "but I must, even to-night, set forth for Londonderry; such are the king's commands."

The now familiar sound of the grating of the bars and bolts which secured the prison door, interrupted him. All eyes were turned anxiously toward the narrow portal; and to their mingled surprise and relief, Father O'Gara, the young priest whom we have had so often occasion to mention, entered the gloomy apartment.

The opportune appearance of this young man, in whom the old knight felt a degree of confidence, for which, even in the momentous conference which he had had with him before, he could scarcely find a warrant, seemed to his excited fancy like a providential solution of his present difficulties; and this impression was, perhaps, heightened and confirmed by the further coincidence, that Glindarragh Castle turned out to be the immediate destination of their visiter. In accordance with the promise he had made Sir Hugh, when last they met in the Carbrie, the young priest had now sought an interview with him, previous to his departure from Dublin, to join the regiment (Torlogh O'Brien's) of which he had been appointed assistant-chaplain; and which, as the reader is aware, was now quartered in the hereditary mansion of the ill-fated knight of Glindarragh.

Here, then, was a messenger, in all particulars adapted to the mission. Secured against the violence of the peasant marauders, by that sacred character, which even the most reckless of the rapparees never failed to respect; and protected from the insolent interruptions of the soldiery, by his own demi-military office. Such advantages, backed by his frank offers of service, and by his already approved good will, in such an emergency easily overbalanced whatever scruples, under circumstances less urgent, might have suggested themselves to the mind of the old knight, and determined him finally to entrust to his execution this, to him, most momentous commission.

The task is imposed and undertaken, with full and accurate directions—with oft-repeated charges and instructions; and commissioned, moreover, with two letters for Percy Neville — one from Sir Hugh himself, the other from a correspondent in England—and which had reached the Carbrie by private hand, the young priest has taken his melancholy leave, and now rides slowly through the quaint streets of Dublin, toward the western suburbs. And now the rustling of green leaves, and the merry songs of small birds are around him; village smoke and lowly thatch rise softly into view, among dark tufted bushes; and rivers rush and glitter under thick shadows of stooping copse-wood. He throws his eyes around him over the varied landscape, with a gush of silent joy and gratitude—and then, breaking from his happy reverie, with a half sigh, and remembering, perchance, the melancholy isolation which has outlawed him, as it were, from the free and happy sympathies of nature, he drops the bridle on his sober palfrey's neck—and with a saddened look, draws down the broad leaf of his slouching hat, and opening his silver-clasped breviary, reads his appointed pages, while his steed treads leisurely along.

Good priest, it would befit thee better to spur on—life and death are in the issue of thy mission—craft and villainy are plotting behind thee. Onward, onward, ere yet the pursuit begins.

* * * * * * * *

The ways of virtue are the ways of wisdom, no less than the ways of pleasantness; and fraud, however craftily conducted, leads oftener than men will easily believe, to mere self-confusion, complication, and defeat. Many a time the wicked find themselves reduced to strive, in the *vain* attempt to obviate those very consequences, to produce which their best exertions were originally given. Many a man has seen, in his actual experience of life, hundreds of examples of this mysterious law of retribution which makes the very craft of the ungodly in which he glories, the instrument of his own abasement, turns all his wisdom into foolishness, and proves his fancied successes in reality, but so many reverses and disasters.

At about the same time, in a small, dark room, in Thomas Talbot's lodgings, that gentleman was closeted with Miles Garrett and his humble friend, Garvey.

"Then the matter, briefly told, is simply this," said Talbot, with gloomy bitterness; "our pains are all gone for nought—the land's not his; and, hang or drown, it's all one to us."

"Just so, your worship," rejoined Garvey, plaintively; "a life estate, with a limitation in tail to the issue of his body."

"I know—just so," continued Talbot; "so that when the old gentleman is hanged, his estates go to the girl, instead of to the crown. S'death, what management! Well, Garrett," he resumed, with dogged contempt, after a brief pause—"what have you to offer upon this dilemma—attaint the girl, eh? or something as profound and practicable."

"How the devil could *I* tell there was a deed of settlement in the way?" retorted Garrett, with asperity; "there's no good in blaming *me* for it."

"Of course—but answer my question," pursued Talbot; "come, come, can you darn the cobweb—or *is* all lost? One thing is clear—as the old fellow *is* attainted, his life estate at least is in the crown, and *that* is worth something. So, egad, we must not snuff him out—till we are sure of some advantage by his death, at least—as the matter stands, hanging him would but deprive us of the little we have got."

"That's plain enough," said Garrett; "he is the sole life in our lease; so far from hanging the old dog we must needs make much of him—at least until this business is cleared up."

"Suppose," said Garvey, speaking very slowly, and with a leer of guilty cunning—"we could get at this unlucky deed;—and if *we* had it fast, what evidence could *they* adduce in support of such a settlement, so as to defeat the king's claim: if that deed were in the fire, I'd snap my fingers at them, the sooner the old man was strung up the better, in such a case."

The three confederates exchanged looks of excited significence. Talbot broke the silence—

"Can you make a guess in whose keeping that instrument at present lies?" he inquired, earnestly.

"No, not now—that is—not yet," replied Garvey; "it is *not* in Crooke's hands—and I can't say at present where it is; but," he added, with a smile of infernal triumph, which disclosed his gapped and discoloured teeth, from ear to ear; "*but* I am promised information, upon which we can rely implicitly—and to-morrow morning we shall know the very spot—the very *inch* which it occupies."

"By ——, then, the thing's done," cried Talbot, striking his hand upon the table.

"'Tis but to get a warrant to seize the papers on suspicion," said Garrett, throwing himself back in his chair, while his contracted brow expanded with the delectable sense of relief—and in the luxury of his sensations, he rubbed his hands together, as though he had been washing them.

"You could not learn to-night?" urged Talbot.

"Impossible—utterly impossible," replied Garvey, with an important shake of the head; "no, not for love or money; the least suspicion would blow all. I must watch my man, and take the time when eyes are off. To-morrow morning, by eight o'clock, I shall know all about it—if Crooke himself knows it."

"Well, then, to-morrow morning be it," said Talbot, rising, thoughtfully; "the thing, however, must be done with some tact and caution. I don't care a fig, myself, for scandal; but here it might be dangerous; nothing venture, nothing win, however—so, in the devil's name, let it be tried. Mr. Garvey," continued Talbot, motioning him somewhat unceremoniously toward the door; "we shall expect to see you here, by eight of the clock, to-morrow morning—nay, no formalities, I pray you—good night—good night, sir—fare you well. If ever the devil had a dutiful drudge on earth," he continued, addressing Garrett, as the descending tread of their humble accomplice was heard upon the stairs; "that sneaking rascal is one."

"He's a useful fellow in his way," said Garrett.

"Very," replied Talbot; but don't leave the handling of that deed to him; let him help you to select it, if you need his aid—but do the important part yourself—*yourself*, mind you—for that rascal might pocket the settlement, and keep it over our heads, afterwards, to extort money— so burn it yourself."

"Meanwhile," said Garrett, "you undertake to have the old man reprieved, lest this should fail."

"Certainly—'tis but a word in my brother's ear," said Talbot; "but if you and Garvey do your business properly, he may hang as high as they please, by this day week."

CHAPTER XXXV.

TIM DWYER'S STORY.

ONCE more our story, in its wayward progress, carries us into the wild scenery of Munster, and among the personages we left there.

Under the grey walls of Glindarragh Castle, in the dewy twilight, sate three companions, in easy listlessness, smoking and chatting together luxuriously: old Con Donovan, Tim Dwyer, and the bilious Dick Goslin, now grown into inseperable comrades, upon the strength of the one grand sympathy—their common love of good liquor—composed the party. Pleasant enough looked the little group, on that calm summer evening, seated under the grey shelter of the time-worn towers, with the river flowing cheerily beneath their feet, and the ivy clusters rustling around them.

The conversation had turned upon the marvellous, perhaps acquiring its solemn complexion from the closing shadows of night.

"I never seen a banshee myself," said Tim Dwyer, stealing an upward glance at the old tower which sheltered them, and at the same time interrupting a thrilling silence which had followed the tale just concluded by the venerable butler; "an' with the help iv God I hope I never will, though my grandmother's aunt—rest her soul—at the time whin ould Peg O'Neil died—that was the publican's mother-in-law—heerd it the whole night long, keenin' and crying on the top iv the house, jist for all the world like a pair iv cats id be tarin' the puddins out iv one another—the crass iv Christ about us."

"Ay, ay," said the butler, solemnly, shaking his head, "that's the way with them, one time singing, an' another time crying—sometimes like one thing, and sometimes like another."

"No being up to them—no being up to them," threw in Goslin, gloomily; "but we've no sich things in England," he added, briskly.

"Nor no witches nor sperits neither—I suppose, no more nor toads an' sarpints, as I said before," said Tim Dwyer, with careless sarcasm, and a nudge to the butler.

"There's witches in more places nor England, and there's no location but what has ghostesses, more or less," retorted Goslin.

"There's more sperits heerd tell of, than seen," said Dwyer, over whom a sense of uneasiness and awe was gradually stealing; "I'll tell you a story iv a whole parish that was freckened beyant all tellin'—an' bad luck to the sperit was in it, good or bad, afther all."

Accordingly Tim having re-adjusted the disposition of his limbs for greater ease, and wound himself up for an effort of recollection, proceeded in these terms:—

"It was in the little village iv Ballymaquinlan it happened, about twinty years ago, last Candlemass; in thim times there was a farmer livin' there, an' his name was Paddy Morgan, an' by the same token, black Paddy was the name they christened an him, for he was a rale nigger, an' a bad mimber all out—an' there was not a respickable man in the parish, barrin' three white rabbits he kep' in a wire cage, along with the rest iv the poultry, in the back-yard, id be seen spakin' to him, an' no wondher; but *thim* was ancommon fond iv him surely, an' to that degree it was comminly consaved among the neighbours, that it wasn't rabbits at all, God bless us, but the sperits iv his three brothers that was in it; but at any rate, in the middle iv all his divilment, he tuck the fever at last, on Monday mornin', an' before Thursday he was in glory, an' the divil a one could deny he desarved it—the villian iv the world. Well, he was buried, in coorse, in the churchyard iv Ballymaquinlan, an' though he had but few relations, an' no friends, the wake and the berrin' was as plisant as if he had them to no end. Well, there was two boys in them days livin' in the town, an' divil sich a pair iv rogues was in the seven parishes; there was no soart or description iv schamin', an' plundherin', an' humbuggin', but they wor up to it. Nothin' was beyant them; begorra there wasn't the likes iv them in Ireland's ground—an' they were sworn frinds into the bargain—an' comrades together, in all soarts of villiany. Whatever the one was for, the other never said agin' it. Larry, the miller, that ownded the flour mills, was one iv them, and sportin' Terence, the dancin'-master, was th' other; a rale pair iv schamers. Well, it happened on the night afther black Paddy Morgan was buried, the two iv them had a plan laid out together. For sportin' Terence having a cousin by the mother's side, that was goin' to give a christenin', an' she bein' a favorite iv his own, he thought he could not do less than to give her a present—so, havin' nothin' else iv his own convanient at the time, he thought the best thing he could do, was jist to give her one iv the neighbour's sheep; an' when he tould Larry, the miller, 'begorra,' says Larry, for he was a ginerous chap too, 'begorra,' says he, 'I don't mind if I give her black Paddy's three white rabbits into the bargain,' says he, an' so, without more to do, they planned to meet at the church door, where there was a little soart iv a shed goin' in, as soon as the sheep and the rabbits id be stole that night. Well, sure enough, Larry the miller, not having so far to go, nor such a troublesome job as sportin' Terence, was the first iv the two at the place iv meetin', an' down he sits an the bench, an' claps the cage with the rabbits in it, on the ground close *opposite* to where he was sittin, while he'd be takin' a shough iv the pipe.

"Well, he was not there long, when who should be comin' up to the church, to get out the cushions as usual, to give them an air iv the fire, but the sexton, Tim Bryan, himself, thinkin' all the way iv nothin' in the world but black Paddy Morgan, that he buried the same mornin', an' thrimblin' in his very skin every step—an' as he was comin' up to the porch, sure enough, what did he see, but black Paddy's three white rabbits in the cage, right at the step iv it, skippin' an' jumpin about like mad; so wid that he stops short, an' he blesses himself as well as he could—an' before he half finished it, Larry, never thinkin' but all was quiet outside, lets a yawn inside, in the porch—and the sound he made, and the white look iv him—for he was dusted all over with flour—finished poor Tim all out intirely—to that degree, that begorra he tuk to his heels, as if the divil himself was after him; an' never tuk time to say as much as God bless us, till he run fairly into little Phil Martin's kitchen. Well, Phil was the clerk in them days, an' an illegant fine one he was—a rale great man iv book larnin': he'd talk algibray or Habrew-Greek for a week, without wonst drawin' breath—an' he had Latin enough to bother a priest—an' as many charrums as id rise the roof aff a chapel. The only thing agin him, at all, at all, was a soart iv a stutther he had, an' his legs bein' crippled in undher him—although that same got him a pow iv help an' presents, one way or another, among the neighbours; but at any rate he was a great man iv book larnin' entirely; an' as soon as Tim the sexton kem to himself, 'oh, Phil,' says he, 'it's all over wid me—I seen himself,' says he, 'as sure as you're sittin' there—black Paddy Morgan, God rest his unforthunate sowl,' says he, 'roarin' like mad wid the fair pains' iv purgathory. Oh, by the hokey,' says he, 'the sound iv it's in my head this minute, sittin' in his windin' sheet, in the church porch,' says he; 'nothin' less id sarve him, an' the three white rabbits an' all,' says he. 'Oh, Phil darlin', I never gev in to sperits before,' says he, 'but I seen one at last, in airnest,' says he—'an' I'll never do a day's good again—an' that's the long and the short iv it," says he.

"'Timothy Bryan,' says the clerk, says he, 'you betther take care what you're sayin,' says he, 'for it's a sarious thing to accuse any man,' says he, 'at laste behind his back, do ye mind, iv walkin' after he's dacently buried,' says he; 'so considher in yourself, again', says he, 'an think twiste before you make such a hanious charge agin any man livin,'' says he.

"Well, wid that, Tim Bryan cursed his sowl and his conscience, antil he was fairly black in the face—and Phil Martin hadn't a word to say agin it any longer.

"'So,' says Phil, says he, 'it astanishes me,' says he, 'you didn't thry him wid the Lord's Prayer backwards,' says he, 'standin' on the left leg,' says he—'for there never was a sperit yet,' says he, 'could stand *that*, as simple as it is,' says he.

"'Arra God bless you,' says Tim, for he was gettin' vexed on the head iv it; 'an' what id the sperit be doin' while I'd be sayin' the Lord's Prayer, like a duck on one leg, backwards,' says he; 'why, man he'd have me swallied, body and bones, before I'd be half way through with it,' says he.

"'Why, you misherable infiddle,' says Phil, makin' answer; 'what is it you'd be afeard iv; swally ye, ye bosthoon, ye—begorra, I'd like to see him attimpt the like. Who ever heard iv a sperit that id dar for to go for to ate a Christian, barrin Joe Garvey, the tinker, God bless us,' says he, 'that tuk a collip out iv the priest's boy,' says he.

"'An' the ghost iv Moll Doyle's black sow,' says Tim, says he, 'the Lord be marciful to us all.'

"'There was that, surely,' says Phil, settlin' his wig—but there's no one will ever pursuade me,' says he, 'that ever a sperit id dar to put a tooth in a sexton, or any other anointed ministher iv divine sarvice,' says he, 'an' in holy ground, more be token,' says he; 'an' be the hokey, it surprises me,' says he, 'you'd be sich a coward and a pagan,' says he, 'as to be afeared iv the likes in your own church, Tim Bryan,' says he.

"'An' what'll I do at all?' says Tim.

"'Lay it, to be sure,' says Phil; 'lay it on the spot—lay it, what else?' says he. 'Be the powers of Moll—I mane be the contints iv that book,' says he, 'aff I had but the use iv my limbs, I'd walk down myself, this instant minute,' says he, 'an' lay it in airnest, before he'd have time to spit on the flure,' says he.

"'Never say it twiste,' says Tim Bryan, takin' him up an the word; 'for I'll carry you down on my back, myself,' says he; 'for iv you're not afeard, neither am I,' says he; 'I've nothin' an' my conscience, its aisy, thank God,' says he; 'so up wid you on my shoulders,' says he, 'an' we'll soon see who is the coward,' says he.

"Well, begorra, as soon as he heerd that, Phil Martin turned the colour iv a bad pittayty—savin' your presence—with the rale fright; but he would not lave it to the sexton to say he was afeard to go along wid him, afther all he said an the head iv it; so, be the powers, havin' nothin' for it but to see the job through, wid a heavy heart up he gets an Tim's back, an off wid the pair of them to the church. There was nothin' but starlight, an' the ould church looked twiste as big an' as black as ever *opposite* them, and divil a one word they said antil they kem within seven or eight steps of the porch, an', begorra, *there* was the three white rabbits, sure enough; an' they could just see them, an hear the wires jinglin' when they'd hop here and there in the cage.

"'Stop—be aisy, can't you,' says Phil, sittin' up an his back, an' diggin' his heels into Tim's breast bone like dhrumsticks, with the rale fright, all the while—'stop where you are, man, we're near enough I tell ye.'

"So wid that Tim stops where he was, an' they both wor freckened to that degree, they neither iv them spoke one word for as good as a minute, but starin' the three rabits for the bare life. At last says Phil Martin, says he, dhrippin' down all the time wid the fair fright—'Tim,' says he, 'thry an' stand an the left leg,' says he, 'as well as you can,' says he; 'for it won't take an operation,' says he, 'anless you do it; for I'm goin' to begin at wanst, God bless us an' save us, says he; 'an' keep steady, you villain,' says he, 'or I'll murther you; for if you fall, as sure as you do, be the powers, we're both done for,' says he.

"So wid that Tim Bryan claps his elbow to the churchyard wall beside him, studdying himself as well as he was able, an' he ups wid his left leg, like a gandher asleep; an' seein' every thing was ready, Phil Martin—givin' himself up for lost—opens, as well as the fright id let him, wid the Lord's prayer backwards. Well, begorra, he made sich a noise, that he was not half way through wid it when Larry the miller, that was half asleep inside iv the porch, rises himself up, thinkin' it was his comrade callin' him; so up he gets, an' out he walks, an' seein' the man wid the bundle an his back, av coorse who should he think it was but his friend the dancin' masther, wid the sheep an his shouldhers. Well, when the sexton, wid the clerk an his back, seen the white thing comin' out iv the porch, an' makin' for them, the pair iv them a'most lost their sinses an the spot. The sexton stood gapin an his two legs, an' the divil a word the clerk could spake, but wid the fright he gripped the hair iv Tim Bryan's head wid both his hands, an' held an for the bare life. 'Is he fat,' says the miller, whisperin', an' comin' towards them, still consaivin' it was the sheep that was in it.

"'Fat or lain,' says the sexton, gettin' back his speech an the instant, with the fair desperation, for he was freckened beyant all bearin'; 'fat or lain,' says he, screechin' it out with the rale fright—'take him as he is,' says he, pitchin' the cripple right before him into the path, an' away wid himself through the town like the wind, as hard as he could peg, not darin' as much as to look behind him; but the quarest thing about it was the cripple himself; for, bedad, he was hardly an the ground when up he jumps an his legs as nimble as if he never lost the use iv them for a day, an' away wid him afther the sexton, roarin' as if the life was lavin' him. But, Tim, the sexton had a long start av him; an', bein' in good wind, he he never tuck time as much as to say 'God bless us!' until he was into his own house, an' the door shut behind him; an' devil a word he could say, good, bad, or indifferent—walkin' up an' down the kitchin', wid the hat off his head, and scarce a taste iv the hair left in it, afther the wisp Phil Martin pulled out iv him; but, oh, Phil Martin! Phil Martin! the Lord have marcy on your sinful sowl—not ate a sexton!—wouldn't he? Oh, bloody wars! it is not a sexton, sure enough, but the best clerk in Ireland's ground he has in his belly by this time,' says he.

"'An' what's wrong wid Phil Martin?' says his wife, Kit Bryan, sharp enough—'what's wrong with him, I am axin'?' says she, fairly bothered with the way he was goin' an, prayin' an' blessin' up an' down the place, all as one as a fool or a ministher: 'what is it ails him,' says she, 'at all, at all, you bosthoon, you?'

"'The divil has him at last,' says he—'that's all.

"'The divil?' says she.

"'Ay, the divil himself! *in propria quæ maribus*. Are you deaf?' says he. 'Oh, murdher! murdher! will I never be quit iv misfortunes?' says he. 'Why in the world couldn't I let the boy alone?' says he.

'What kem over me at all, at all, to ax him to get up an my back?' says he. 'What put it into my head ever to think iv the likes?' says he. 'I have the loss iv his sinful sowl on me now,' says he; 'an' his sperit 'ill be afther me every hour iv the night,' says he, 'as long as I'm alive; an' I won't say agin it, but I desarve the likes,' says he; 'for I'll never deny but I was guilty iv a dirty turn—bad luck to myself!' says he; 'for I never was done before. His sperit 'ill be afther me, I tell ye, night an' mornin', wherever I go,' says he.

"An' just with them words, Phil Martin himself pushes in the door as white as a sheet, an' in wid him into the middle iv them.

"'The sperit!' says Tim, lettin' a roar you'd hear half a mile away, an' leapin' up an the table, wid his face to the wall: 'the sperit!' says he. 'Didn't I tell you? We're done for!' says he, 'every mother's son iv us.'

"An' begorra, when Phil the cripple hears that, thinkin' the sperit was behind himself, he runs right through the kitchen like a mad bull, and never stops to look round, but into the bed-room he boults, an' into the bed wid him, head foremost, an' before you'd have time to wink an eye, he had himself rowled up, in a ball, in the bed-clothes; an' out runs the family, screechin' like mad; an', the more they screeched, the tighter Phil rowled himself round in the clothes, until he rowled fairly off the bed, right into the washing-tub, and stuck in it fast, in a ball, antil he was tuck up an hour afther, wid scarce any breath or sinses left in his body.

"Well, all the time the clerk an' the sexton was runnin' away, Larry the miller was just as much freckened as themselves; for nothin' id persuade him but what it was the divil himself he seen carryin' away black Paddy Morgan, body an' bones, an his back; and what put it beyant all doubts wid him, was the way the clerk kept screechin' every step he run.

"The divil has me,' he'd roar out iv him, an' 'oh, murdher, the devil has hould iv me fast,' an' such other violent injeetions an' expressions all the way. 'Tare an owns,' says the miller, turnin' could all over him, 'I'll never be the betther iv that the longest day I have to live,' says he, 'it's a rale lesson to sinners iv all soarts. God bless us,' says he, 'it's amost tuck the sinses out iv me,' says he, crassin' himself, 'an' I hope I'll have grace to mend my ways an' take warnin' by what I seen an' heerd this blessed night,' says he. 'Bad luck to them rabbits,' says he, rising the cage wid one kick, 'they're throublin' my canscience,' says he, 'and I'd give the hat off my head I never stole one iv them,' says he; 'but begorra, there's no use in frettin about it now,' says he, 'for there's no way iv preventin' the past barrin' confession alone,' says he, 'an' I'll go to Father Murphy this blessed minute,' says he, 'an I'll tell him what I seen an' heerd; though, begorra, it's a bad case, I'm afeard,' says he, 'an' a bad way things is in wid you, Paddy Morgan, you unforthunate sinner,' says he, 'an' 'ill take the divil's sthrong allowance iv masses all out; but don't give in,' says he, 'for if any one's up to the thricks of the divil it's the clargy, God reward them,' says he.

"So wid that he med the best iv his way to Father Murphy's' blessin' himself every second step he took, an' afther his raverence heard it all,

"'Are you sure,' says he, 'they went clane out iv the church-yard?' says he,

"I am, your raverence,' says he.

"'Take care what you say, you bliggard,' says his raverence,' 'for you'll never have a day's luck iv you desave your clargy,' says he, 'an I ax you again, you villian, are you sure an' sartin they went out iv the church-yard, both iv them, quite an' clane?' says he.

"'Sure an' sartin as I am standin' here, your raverence,' says the miller, 'didn't I see them as plain as I see you?' says he, 'an' didn't I hear him screechin' murdher the whole way through the town?'

"'Well, then,' says his raverence, turnin' to the mass boy he had wid him, 'get the things ready,' says he, 'for it's only my duty to do what I can for his poor wandherin' soul,' says he, 'and if the family chooses to consider my throuble,' says he, 'it'ill be all the betther for themselves hereafter when they are in a sim*i*liar situation; as we must all iv us come to it, airly or late,' says he.

"Well, whin all was ready, sure enough himself an' his sarvint, an' the mass-boy, wid holy wather an' all soarts, an' two blessed candles, an' the priest's robes, an' everything complate, an' Larry the miller along wid them to show them the place where it happened, an' a tindherbox to light the candles—God bless us—an' the mass-boy's dhress on him, an' the prayer-books, an' all; so Larry bein' afeard to go into the church-yard agin, stopped outside, an' his raverence an' all the rest iv them lights the candles and rises the prayers, though begorra there was not one iv them but was wishin' it was fairly over; so into the porch with them, shakin' an' trimblin,' with the candles, an' all; an' they wor blessin' in Latin, an' sprinklin' their wather, av coorse, an everything before them, when who should come quietly round but sportin' Terence, the dancin' masther, with a murdherin' fat sheep on his back, thinkin' to find his comrade an' the rabbits in the porch, where they were all to meet; but when he seen the light, and heerd the quare sounds goin' an' inside, in spite iv all he could do, the thoughts iv black Paddy Morgan kem into his head; but he would not let an; an' says he to himself, 'It's only that schamin' Larry,' says he, 'that's thinkin' to frighten me—the bliggard,' says he.

"Well, while he was comin' an quite an easy—'baah,' says the sheep on his back:

"Did yez hear nothin' outside,' says his raverence, turnin' the colour iv a scalded pig, an' stoppin' in the middle iv the prayer; 'did yez or no, ye villians—did yez hear it—yes or no,' says he.

"'Ba-a-ah,' says the sheep, again, twiste as loud as before.

"'Oh, bloody wars! I mane holy Saint Christipher!' says the priest, says he, 'what is it at all, at all; did not that thevin' bliggard, Larry the miller tell us, God bless us, it was gone complately out iv the church-yards, sweet bad luck to him—the villian, an' here it is as sthrong as a bull—all as one—and we jammed up in this little bit iv a corner, wid no where to run to—bad luck—I mane God bless us all,' says he.

"'Ba-a-ah,' says the sheep again.

"'Holy Virgin, Saint Anthony, an' Nebechadnaser,' says the priest, tumblin' his robe over his head wid the foosther he was in, 'is there no way out iv this, right or left, up or down, iv any soart, body or sowl,' says he, dhrivin' himself agin' the church door, thinking to have a run through the aisle, an' a jump through the windy for his life; down goes the sarvint boy on his hunkers, an' the little mass boy a top iv him. Ba-a-ah goes the sheep again; an' 'holy Saint Jupether—Saint Bridget assist us,' says the priest, an' wid that up walks Terence, not knowin' what in the world was the matter, an' right into the front iv the porch wid him. Well, when his raverence seen him wid the white thing bundled up on his shoulders, he lets one roar like a dying pig, an' he flings the candle right into Terence's eye; an' begorra Terence himself wasn't one taste betther, for the minute he seen the priest, before ever his raverence had time to fling the candle—with all his robes, and the little boy dhressed out—an' all the rest iv the coothriments—he lets one bawl out iv him, you'd hear over Kilworth mountain, wid the rale madness iv fright. 'It's black Paddy Morgan himself says he, flingin' the sheep head foremost among them, an' cuttin' acrass the yard, an' over the wall like a greyhound. 'Take him wid you,' says the priest, jumpin' back, an' knockin' down the little mass boy, an' puttin' out the light wid the boult he made—'take him wid you. in God's name,' says he, 'to hell, or anywhere else out iv this;' an' makin' a charge in rale desperation, his raverance jumped right over the sheep, as clane as a slitther, an' never stopped runnin' until he got home—no one ever knew how—more dead than alive; an' begorra, he tuck to his bed, an' wasn't the better iv it for a full year;

an' the end iv the whole iv it was, there was no less than seven indiveedials that was ready to sware, next mornin', they seen the divil—God bless us—or the ghost iv black Paddy—or the two iv them together; an' there was so many ins an' outs in the story, that it bothered the whole kit iv them to make head or tail iv it, for a good five months afther the fair iv Ballymaquinlan an' in the mane time, the miller changed his coorses, and tuk to mass an' good company, an' all other soarts iv mortification; an next mornin' his raverince sint the coadjuthor with a half pint of holy wather to complate the job, as he said himself; an' so, Misther Goslin, you see to a monstheration, be the mains iv this story, that it's often-times there's a power iv good fright goes for nothin'—and a dale more holy wather scatthered, than there's quite occasion for; an' take warnin' by Larry the miller, an' don't be frightened out iv your fun, nor runnin' blindfold into dacency an' religion, before you know the rason why.' "

As Tim Dwyer concluded his story, which has, perhaps, too long interrupted ours, the shadows of night were stealing fast over the landscape; and yielding with prompt good-will to Con Donovan's suggestion, "to be thinkin' about supper," the little party had soon effected a comfortable retreat within the castle walls.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

The moon shone gloriously from the soft summer clouds, and silvered the woods and towers of Glindarragh, as Percy Neville, overtaken by the nightfall in his ramble, found himself once more under the shadow of the oaks and thorns. The presence of the king's soldiers in the castle, however in other respects undesirable, was attended at least with this good result—that no predatory invasion was any longer to be apprehended from the wild peasantry; and thus the ancient mansion and its surrounding woods were now as secure and peaceful as in the happiest times of civil quiet.

As the young invalid slowly approached the bridge of Glindarragh, he heard upon the sequestered bye-road which debouched at its extremity, the rapid tread of a horse's hoof; and pausing by the battlement, he saw beneath the stooping boughs, the advancing form of a horseman.

"God save you, sir," said the cavalier, gravely drawing up upon the bridge, beside the young gentleman, and raising his hat with a formal salutation—"I bear with me some letters for the castle—and some, if I mistake not, intended for your own hand; may I ask your name? Even as I suspected," continued O'Gara, his question answered—"I have two letters addressed to you."

Percy Neville, with a courteous acknowledgment, took the letters which the young priest extended toward him, and, leaning against the battlement of the bridge, as the horseman rode up the steep ascent to the castle gate, he read their contents in the bright moonlight. Sir Hugh's letter was a hurried one, and intentionally made light of his own present difficulties. In the belief, therefore, that the old knight was undergoing no more than the inconvenient formalities of a temporary confinement, the young gentleman, without much anxiety, passed on to the next. This was from his father, Sir Thomas Neville; one passage from it we shall quote; it was couched in the following terms:—

"On receipt of these, it is my pleasure you shall set forth from Glindarragh, and crossing the Shannon into Clare, by which course you will be less like to meet interruption, than were you to take the long road through Dublin; so to pass on for Antrim in the north, where I shall expect your arrival, as doth my honoured friend, Sir John Campbel. You can get a protection from any general officer; but, as Sir John is known to be a Whig, you had best not mention your exact destination. It is now high time you were settled in life. I have let my cousin Hugh know my opinion of his weakness in suffering a wilful young hussey to disappoint both him and me. Mayhap, however, it is better so. I have at present in view such an alliance as will be, in point of rank, more honourable, and no less desirable in the matter of wealth; but I will more fully unfold my purpose when he had accosted her before. "We have read the petition, young lady." a fortnight."

There was nothing in this letter, one might have thought, to make the young man particularly sorrowful; and yet he was very pensive and melancholy, as he folded it again. He leaned over the moss-grown parapet, and looked sadly down upon the chafing stream, and then up again upon the broad sailing disc of the summer moon.

"And so, and so, all is ended," he said, in regretful meditation; "all her innocent, pretty ways—her simple kindness—the chance meetings that gave such a charm to every day—all gone and over for me. Am I never to see her again—her light step, her beautiful smile—shall I hear her voice no more, the sweetest, the softest?"

He paused abruptly, and a pang of grief and loneliness more bitter than he had felt for many a year, wrung his heart; and if the truth must e'en be told, it needed the whole force of all his stoicism to restrain the tears from starting. With a bitter effort, however, he mastered the weakness which threatened to unman him.

"I little dreamed," he said, "the thought of leaving her would cost me grief like this. She little thinks it either—she, who never cast away a thought on me, save in simple kindness—she will forget me, as lightly as she would the chance traveller, whom her bounty had relieved; and I—I must forget her too—I will forget her—if I may—— And yet," he resumed bitterly, after a pause—"it is, perchance, better thus—better to part thus early, and while it is yet possible, than to wait on, and break my heart. Only to think on it—sure never did dream steal away the senses like this—never did dream work such sweet and sorrowful magic. From the moment when I saw her first, in that old orchard, which I love, and always will for her sake—when I saw her standing there, in her simple, sad, exquisite beauty, a spell was on me, which I had—which I *have*—no power to break—a spell which will enchain me, heart and soul, for ever. And then to think—oh, God! is it not bitter—that *I*, loving her thus—ay, *loving*, loving her to madness—that I can never tell her this—that she can never know it. Pride, pride, pride—accursed pride," he said, with the vehemence of anguish, as with a slight but expressive gesture, he struck the folded letter, which he still held in his hand, upon the battlement of the bridge—"pride, parental pride, commands me to be silent—forbids me to woo to an honourable alliance, this most noble and beautiful creature—this being whom I love so fondly, so unutterably, because, alas! she is humble in fortune and in birth. And therefore must I, with all my store of love and adoration untold, part from her silently—never, most like, in all the wayward paths of life to meet her more.

But then," he resumed, "she cares not for me—that is, beyond mere simple kindness—she knows nought of the love I bear her. I, myself scarce knew it until now. To her this parting will be but so many last words, and one last look—to *me*, a struggle that wrings the very heart. But that avails not: were I to plead and pray, with all the fond love of my heart, 'tis more than likely she would refuse to hear me. I cannot now bethink me I ever marked *that*, in her words or looks, which could show me that she liked me; wherefore, then, say more; Better to part thus, and at once, than strive to involve her in the fate of one whom misfortune would thenceforward mark for its own—dependant upon the pleasure of an ambitious and imperious father. Ay, ay, 'tis better as it is : pride, you have triumphed," and as he spoke, he crushed the letter in his clenched hand. "Yes," he pursued ; "it will need much stoicism—a sore effort ; but I shall not be wanting to myself—I shall leave this place to-morrow—I shall leave it early, and without seeing her—I shall avoid the possibility of seeing her—I am resolved there shall be no leave-taking."

He had hardly uttered this doughty resolution, when he heard a light footfall approaching the bridge. The little sound smote heavy on his heart—a thousand thousand remembrances and feelings rose at its tiny summons—and in an instant all his resolves were obliterated and gone. There she came, indeed, alone—descending the steep road at the far bridge foot, her light cloak drawn about her, and her little shoe-buckles glittering at every step in the moonlight. So, after all, they were to meet before he left the old castle—and under the screen of the wild thorn, whose roots were knotted in the buttress of the bridge, and beneath the soft and melancholy radiance of the moon, Percy Neville and the simple country beauty stood together, in another minute, upon the lonely road.

"Whither are you going, my pretty Phebe?" asked Percy Neville, with a melancholy smile.

"I am going down to Nurse Eileen's, sir," she answered, gently.

"Nurse Eileen—the good old woman who nursed *you*, my pretty Phebe," he continued in the same tone ; "I feel fond of the old nurse, myself—though, in truth, I could scarce tell why, unless it be, mayhap, because she loves you so well."

The girl looked with sweet embarrassment in his face—and then turned her glance downward upon the chafing river.

"And where does nurse Eileen live?" asked he, willing to prolong this chance interview.

"In the old Abbey Mill, sir," answered she, again raising her soft, dark, melancholy eyes, "on the border of the wood, by the river bank ; it was the knight—Sir Hugh—that made it up for her—God bless him—and put her there."

"I know it—a pretty, small, thatched house, by the river side, among the oaks. She is very happy there, I dare say," he pursued, with a sigh. "You and she are very happy together."

She looked up into his face with one of her own sad, beautiful smiles, but marking the singularly melancholy expression which reigned there, the smile with all the eloquence of its modest dimples, gave place to a look of sorrow, and almost of pain—and turning her eyes pensively away, she plucked from among the moss which covered the old battlement, one of the little blue weeds that nodded there; it chanced to be that wild flower to which poets and lovers have given the name of "forget-me-not."

"Give me that little flower," he said, very sorrowfully and tenderly, after he had watched her small fingers playing with its slender stem, for some minutes. "They call it a 'forget-me-not,' and if *you* give it, 'twill, indeed, prove one to me; give it to me—pretty Phebe—and it will remind me of this spot, and this hour—when I am far away—and, perchance, when years are past and gone."

With a mournful smile of perfect innocence and modesty, she held the little flower toward him. He took it, and he took her hand.

"We have been very good friends—have we not?—since I came here, my pretty Phebe," he continued in the same mournful tone—"we have been good friends all that time, and so you must not take away your hand from me, for a few short minutes now; for this is, perchance, the last time in my life I shall ever see and speak with you, my kind little friend—my pretty Phebe."

In the moonlight, he thought, he saw her colour change as he said this. She did not speak, however, but lowered her head a little, as if to adjust her cloak, and he plainly felt the little hand he held tremble in his own.

"Does she love me—does she really love me?" thought he, as he gazed passionately upon the beautiful girl.

"Phebe," he continued, after more than a minute had passed in silence, "my pretty Phebe, when I am gone away, as I shall be to-morrow—will you sometimes think of me—will you remember poor Percy Neville."

She strove to smile, she tried to speak, but she could not; it was all in vain; the fountains of her full heart were unlocked—the unavailing struggle was over—and she wept in all the abandonment of desolate and bitter grief.

In an instant every colder thought and remembrance vanished from his mind. Warm, generous, fervent, as ever flowed from a lover's full heart, the words of passion, devotion, adoration, pledged him for ever to the weeping girl. What recked he of consequences; what cared he for the difficulties of the distant future. She loved him—loved him truly; he would not—he *could* not give her up.

What boots it to follow this scene of passionate romance through all its length. They parted, then, beneath that wild-thorn tree, pledged and promised one to the other, through every chance and change of life,

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE PARCHMENT.

Weary after a day of tedious travel, O'Gara entered the old castle-yard, as we have described, and fully impressed with the importance of his mission, hastened, spite of his fatigue, to acquit himself of his momentous undertaking. In compliance with Sir Hugh's minute directions, he selected, as his bed chamber, the old knight's apartment, which, as we have mentioned in an early chapter of this book, was situated in one of the projecting towers, overhanging the river; he at his leisure rummaged the dusty papers and parchments which filled the old press in the ante-chamber—and, at length, to his infinite satisfaction, discovered the identical deed of settlement—the precious document of which he was in search.

It is necessary to be somewhat particular in detailing his proceedings, inasmuch as he was that night destined to experience an adventure, whose consequences exerted an important influence upon the subsequent events of our history.

Having ascertained by an accurate scrutiny, the identity of the deed he had selected, as the actual document of which he was in search—he sate down before a roaring fire of turf and bog-wood, in what we have called the ante-chamber or dressing room, through which his bed-chamber was reached, and then enjoyed at his leisure, such substantial refection as his jaded condition demanded. His supper ended, fatigue began to weigh his eyelids down, and leaving the door of communication open, he placed his loaded pistols upon the table where he had supped, and for greater security, brought the parchment itself with him into his bed-chamber, and laid it safely under his pillow, upon which his own weary head was soon pressed in dreamless slumber.

He might have slept for some hours, when he became conscious, though without thoroughly awaking, that some one was cautiously moving about his bed-room, with a candle, and stealthily moving the furniture and searching among his clothes; but the sense of fatigue was so overpowering, that, although he actually opened his eyes, and saw the light shifting, and the distended shadow of a human form gliding upon the wall, he had no distinct consciousness of anything sufficiently extraordinary in the circumstance, to warrant his interfering—and wanted energy to arouse himself so far as to call out and speak to the intruder. Thus it was that once or twice he was thus partially awakened, and again relapsed into the overpowering forgetfulness of sleep ; before, upon one of those occasions of temporary consciousness, he distinctly saw the face of an ugly, sinister-looking man, glide close by the curtains of his bed ; the face seemed travelsoiled, anxious, and villainous, and was stooped down, under the light of the candle, as if peering in cautious search after something ; there was that in the features, momentary as was the glimpse which he had obtained of them, which suggested to his mind some association of remembered outrage and danger, with such sudden and painful power, that in an instant he felt himself thoroughly aroused.

"Who's there ?" cried the young priest, in a tone of sudden alarm.

There was no reply whatever, but instantaneously the candle was extinguished. O'Gara, however, thought he could distinctly hear the sound of a cautious retreat in the outer room ; and without an instant's hesitation, except so much as was necessary to feel the parchment under the pillow, he sprang from his bed, and followed the sounds. As he entered at the door communicating with his bed room, he saw, indeed, clearly enough a retreating form skulking in a stooping posture from the outer room.

He stretched his hand instantly to the table for his pistols, but the fire light showed him that they were gone ; his visiter had taken the precaution to remove them—a sufficiently unequivocal evidence of a sinister purpose. Glad that the intruder had, at all events, relieved the apartment of his presence, O'Gara followed to the outer door, looked forth upon the passage, and hearing nothing, contented himself with shutting the door, and turning the key in the lock upon the inside.

For some time after his return to bed, he was kept awake by uneasy conjectures and speculations as to the purpose of the visit which had thus disturbed him ; and no less so by the fruitless endeavour to recall the time or the season or any of the attendant circumstances in which the countenance, somewhere and somehow unquestionably seen before, had first been presented to him. But gradually the soothing rush of the waters, seconded by the fatigues of his journey, prevailed over every more exciting influence, and he once again sank into profound repose.

Perhaps it was that the agitating occurrence which we have just described made O'Gara's after-slumbers lighter and more easily disturbed ; but certain it is that he was wakened on a sudden by a slight rustling at the side of the bed, and distinctly heard a soft step crossing the floor of his chamber, toward the outer room, and at the same moment a very low knocking, like a tapping with the nails, at the outside door. His first instinct, as before, was to thrust his hand beneath his pillow. Good God ! the parchment was gone ! In an instant he was upon the floor ; and just as he entered the antechamber, he saw, in the imperfect fire light, the squat, sinister figure which had appeared by his bedside, and so unpleasantly occupied his drowsy fancy, reach the chamber door, and turning the key hurriedly in the lock, exclaim, in a harsh screech—

"Found, by——. I have it—I have it."

Straight at this hideous thief the young priest darted, heedless of all consequences. The villain did not wait to open the door, and make his escape upon the passage; but leaving it vacant for the entrance of his accomplice, he ran round the room, screaming "help!" and pursued by O'Gara in his shirt. A tall, powerful form, however, now bolted into the room, and joining in the scramble, clutched the unarmed priest around the waist in his iron gripe, so tight that he scarce had room to breathe; and exclaimed in a piercing whisper—

"Now, now, Garvey—now, you idiot; now, into the fire with it. Well done; grind your heel on it; roll the red fire over it. Well done, boy. Never fear, I have him fast."

As he thus reiterated his directions, the half suffocated and helpless priest, to his unutterable agony, beheld the ugly familiar execute his orders to the letter. The parchment shriveled, smoked, and smouldered; and at last he saw Garvey's foot grind its very ashes into powder.

"There now," growled Garrett, relieving the struggling priest with a rude shove, "our business here is done; so if you'll take a fool's counsel, you'll just get back again into your bed, which, by the way you'd have done wisely not to have left at all."

"You have done a foul wrong, Mr. Garrett," said the priest, indignantly. "That caitiff there has stolen the paper from under my head, as I slept, and by your direction destroyed it. The mischief is, I fear, irreparable; but it must be answered for."

"Get to your bed, I tell you," retorted Garrett, menacingly: "you are too fond, by half, of meddling in other men's intrigues; beware, or you'll burn your fingers at last. You have come in my way once or twice already—be prudent, and seek not to thwart me again."

"I seek to thwart no man in the pursuit of his lawful business or pleasure," replied O'Gara; "but I will not submit to be robbed, and to see the property entrusted to my care, destroyed, without remonstrance and complaint, where both will be attended to."

"What I have done, I have warrant for," retorted Garrett, doggedly; "I am armed with authority to search here for papers—to seize such as I please, and deal with them at my discretion; and thus much I will tell you, my worthy sir, there is enough in my possession to mark you for suspicion; do you hear, to involve you in correspondence with convicted traitors—so if you be wise, you will stir as little as need be at present. Above all, forbear offending those, who, if provoked, may prove themselves possessed alike of the will and the power to punish you."

Having thus spoken, with a threatening shake of the head, Garrett strode from the room, without waiting for an answer, and pushing Garvey before him, swung the door fast, and left O'Gara confounded and dismayed at the disastrous issue of his mission.

"I have nothing for it," said he, after some minute's reflection, "but to return to Dublin, if I can obtain permission to do so; and, at least, to secure my own honour against the imputation of a share in this most infamous proceeding—as well as to clear my conscience by the fullest information I can give, of the reproach of having screened the villains by my silence. I greatly fear the loss is an irreparable—a ruinous one."

Without attempting to return to his bed, he hurried through the offices of his simple toilet, with all convenient dispatch—and seating himself by the fire, awaited in solitary and anxious ruminations, the arrival of the morning.

How different were the feelings with which Miles Garrett paced the floor of his chamber. It was nigh twenty years since he had last passed a night in Glindarragh Castle. Sir Hugh was then a prosperous gentleman, and greeted him with all the hospitality of kindred and affection. A beautiful young bride was by his side, in all the pride of her early loveliness—glad and happy as the song of the merry lark in a summer's morning—proud and generous as she was beautiful—but alas! too light, too vain, too fond of admiration—too open to flattery, for safety against the arts of villains; and now, how was all this wrecked and blasted—how hideous and desolate the contrast!

As Miles Garrett, in the irrepressible excitement of his recent triumph, strode slowly through the long wainscoated apartment, of which he was the solitary tenant, spite of all the exultation of his success, he felt occasionally a sudden misgiving—a pang of something like fear, if not remorse—as the remembrance of all he had inflicted—the portentous desolation which he alone had wrought, came darkly to his mind. He started, with an effort, from this haunting thought, as a feverish sleeper would from a recurring nightmare—and busied his mind with projects of further aggrandisement, and schemes of future vengeance.

"The thing is done," muttered he, as half jaded with his own excitement, he threw himself into an armed chair, before the expiring fire; "done and ended; there is no need any longer to avert his fate—so, in the devil's name, let him hang now, as soon as they list. Why should I budge to save him? pshaw! this dark old room, with its accursed remembrances rising like vapours round me, makes a mere child of me; why, in hell's name, should *I*, of all men, stir to save him? why should I turn chicken-hearted, and lose courage now? Curse my folly; how Talbot, and even that sneaking dastard, Garvey, would laugh at me if they knew it! 'Sdeath, let the old dog hang, the sooner the better—

it's not my doing—and, if it were, by —— he has earned it well of my hands; aye, fifty times over—the insolent, dogged fool! No, no," he continued, after a long pause; "I'm not so weak—I'm not so mean, as to help the snarling, ungrateful, old libeller out of his troubles; he has turned on me twice, when I offered to succour him—and, 'fore God, he shall never do so a third time. And then there's that hopeful Spaniard; well, well, no matter—all in good time. Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast is a better—and we'll see whether I'll not get the whip-hand of Colonel O'Brien yet; all in good time—'fair and easy goes far in a day.'"

He shook his head slowly, and smiled a pale sinister smile, upon the smouldering fire as he spoke; and then bit his lip, and contracted his brows, in deep and silent thought—buried in which we shall for the present leave him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE THUNDER STORM.

About four or five days had now elapsed since the events recorded in our last chapter. A sultry day, and a sky overcast with masses of lurid cloud, had heralded in a night of unusual darkness. The distant mutterings of the coming storm had now deepened into the nearer thunder; the big, sullen rain-drops beat the pavement with rapid splash, as peal after peal rattled and bellowed close over the house-tops, like the opening of gigantic artillery, upon the devoted city. Long, winding streets and alleys, gables, chimneys, bulk-heads, and sign-boards started into sharp light and shadow, in the intense white glare of the lightning; for one instant the flooded gutters, the quaint houses, the cowering passengers, each point of prominence, every diamond window pane, every street post, every stone, reflected the dazzling burst of livid fire—and in the next the crashing thunder swept the ghastly pageant back into the darkness of chaos.

It was upon this awful night of tempest and gloom, that a horseman, but just dismounted, stood dripping in his broad-leafed hat, and drenched mantle of coarse black cloth, within the chief entrance of the Carbrie. He was parleying with one of the servants of the hostelry, and the result of his conference was speedily to conduct him by a private way up a back-stairs, and into a small, sombre-looking bed-chamher, where, toil-worn, wet, and fasting as he was, he applied himself, with no other measure, towards his own comfort, than that of throwing aside his cloak and hat, to the task of writing a letter, with much apparent care and anxiety, while the servant hurried through the arrangements of his dingy chamber, and having lighted a fire, departed. The stranger, who was thus left to his cheerless meditations, was no other than O'Gara, whose ill success our last chapter has sufficiently detailed.

Several times, as he proceeded in his tedious task, he had been interrupted by the sound of voices in the room next to that in which he was sitting. On a sudden, the tone of one of the speakers appeared to strike his ear with peculiar and absorbing interest. His pen was arrested in the midst of a word—his pale face was raised, and his lips parted, with an expression of eager and almost horrified attention—while his eyes were fixed upon the partition through which the sounds had reached him. Drawing his breath with a gentle sigh, after the long suspense, O'Gara laid down the pen beside him, as softly as though the sound of a falling feather might have determined his fate—and stepping, with outstretched arms and noiseless tread across the room, he reached the chink in the wooden division, through which he had marked the flickering of the light in the adjoining apartment. He held his breath as he looked through : and, aided by the gestures and the countenances of those who spoke, as well as by their nearer proximity, he was enabled, with tolerable distinctness, to catch the substance of their colloquy. He was just in time to see a half-concealed figure, in black, pass from the chamber, and the door shut roughly after it. Miles Garrett was standing with his back to the fire ; and his eyes, which had followed the departing figure, with no very friendly glance, were still fixed upon the door, with an expression of rage and spite, which lighted his unsightly visage with a character little short of murderous. Garvey sate close by a table scarce a yard away from his employer, stealthily watching his countenance with an eye of keen and villainous scrutiny ; which, however, as Garrett's glance was suddenly directed upon him, was quickly exchanged for the usual look of crouching sycophancy. It failed, however, to conciliate the proprietor of Lisnamoe, whose recent interview appeared to have left a sting of the deadliest kind behind it.

"And so, Mr. Garvey, you are looking out for a new patron," said Garrett, with ominous pleasantry, while a smile that chilled the little scrivener with affright, gleamed in his eye ; "you are looking for a new patron—and priest Talbot, you think, would serve your purpose—you do —but pray, my very sly little gentleman, did you never hear that it is ill husbandry to throw out the foul water till you are sure of the fresh ?"

"I'm not looking—indeed I'm not. Mr. Garrett, for a new patron," stammered Garvey.

"And what then did you mean, may I inquire?" continued Garrett, with the same ominous smile, and constrained calmness, while a slight hitching of the shoulders, and a measured shake of the head, betrayed the intensity of his passion—"what did you mean by saying—you thought his extortionate proposal a reasonable one—answer me that, sir? What did you mean by that—will you have the goodness to say?"

"Why, sir, Mr. Garrett, you know he had the cards in his own hands; if he chose to balk the business, he could leave you in the lurch, as easy as turn on his heel," said Garvey, with a deprecatory tone, and a look of genuine alarm—"and I thought——"

"You *thought*—did you?—you thought," continued Garrett, in the same vein; and unable any longer to curb his fury, he thundered, "and who the devil gave you leave to think?" and at the same moment, with the back of his open hand, he dealt the affrighted wretch, a box across the face so furious that he fell back, stunned for the moment, in his chair, and the blood spirted from his nose and mouth, and died his ashy face in crimson; "that will teach you to meddle, when you are not wanted, you confounded oaf, you"—he added, but whether it was that upon reflection, his own convictions acquitted Garvey, or that the severity of the infliction had a little exceeded what he had contemplated—and, perhaps, had even a little shocked him, certain it is, that he added no more in the way of reproach, but turning sullenly toward the fire, left Garvey to recover at his leisure, while he whistled a quick march, and thrusting one hand into his pocket, leaned his elbow upon the chimneypiece, and wagged his head in time, until hearing his companion blowing his nose, coughing, and evincing other signs of returning vigour, he vouchsafed him a surly glance over his shoulder, and asked him with considerable asperity, "what for he kept blowing like a grampus, and whether he meant to make a night of it?"

An ugly portrait enough, did Garvey's visage present, pale and bloody, and wearing in every feature the hideous expression of malignant rage, contending with craven terror—while his eyes, in which were usually discernable no traces of passion or significance, but the half-quenched glitter of stealthy cunning, now gleamed with the mingled hate and cowardice of the poisoner, as they followed Garrett with undisguised but unconscious meaning.

Meanwhile the thunder bellowed, and the rain pattered without, in sustained, and still increasing fury.

"Never mind it, man," said Garrett, at last, in a tone of gruff conciliation; "what a cursed fuss you make about half nothing. Come, come, what will you have—wine or———"

"No, no, Mr. Garrett, I thank you, said Garvey, with a distracted smile, while he continued wiping his face in his hand, and at every removal looking at the blood with which it was still covered—"I'll remember it—I'll remember it when the time comes."

"You'll *remember* it?" repeated Garrett after him, in a tone of menacing inquiry.

"That is," added Garvey, hastily; for whatever his real meaning might have been, the gathering cloud of suspicion upon his patron's brow plainly indicated the prudence of qualifying the phrase; "that is, I'll charge it in the bill of costs."

"Umph—run rusty, eh?" muttered Garrett; "he'll remember it—will he. Look ye, Mr. Garvey——"

"You mistake me, Mr. Garrett; you mistake me," interposed Garvey, with a sudden accession of humility.

"Well, suppose I do, Mr. Garvey, it's as well to tell you at once, you're no dog for my money, if you can't bear the lash," said Garrett, doggedly; "with me you'll get just what you deserve—whether you've made a hit or made a mistake; and if you don't like my terms—why, there's the door."

Garvey sate still; and his master, turning upon his heel, lounged carelessly to the window.

A long pause ensued, during which Garrett drew the curtain at the window, so that every blinding glare of lightning shone into the chamber, eclipsing the murky glimmer of the candle in its awful brightness.

"It is a queer night," said he, after one of these flashes so dazzling and so near, that he had involuntarily shrunk in its light, and held his breath during the stunning explosion which followed—"a queer night; one would almost think the devil had business on his hands. How is Lady Willoughby—she has been dying for the last week; I would not wonder if her ladyship made her flitting to-night; the old boy is at his tricks—egad, the whole air smells like brimstone."

"She's near her end—near enough," said Garvey, once more restored, at least to outward calmness; and, as he spoke, he and his companion were both dazzled again in the intense glare, followed, or rather accompanied by a clanging report, under which the old mansion rocked and trembled in every stone and timber. "God bless us," he ejaculated with a shudder, after an interval of some seconds, and making an imperfect attempt to cross himself, "it would be an awful night to die in, and Coyle says she has not much life left in her; its a frightful night—I thought the old place was blown about our ears that time; God Almighty guard us."

"What are you mouthing about," muttered Garrett, who began to catch the contagion of Garvey's terrors; "stop your praying and bless sing, or I'll give you something to talk about—it makes my skin creep to hear you—a nice fellow you are to put up prayers for people in a night like this; curse me, but it's enough to bring a thunderbolt on the place, so it is."

Garrett turned again to the table, and taking out his purse, counted out several pieces of gold upon the board.

"That Coyle is as hungry a thief as this villainous town contains," he muttered through his teeth, as he reckoned the coins; "the rogue charges his own price—well, well, it's not much matter, after all; this extortion can't last long—one week more, perhaps, and then a plain, deal coffin, and the sexton's fee; here Garvey," he continued, "take it to the scoundrel at once—it's a cursed imposition, but we can't help it; take it—pshaw! what are you afraid of—it's but a step, and you'll find me here when you return."

Garvey knew the temper of his employer too well to hazard an expostulation or demur; and throwing now and then a stealthy glance of uneasiness and discontent through the window, upon the external storm and darkness, he proceeded to wrap his shabby cloak about his shoulders, and gathering up the money, and counting it again, he consigned it to his pocket, and hat in hand, proceeded silently from the room.

Without one moment's hesitation, O'Gara, in like manner, wrapt in his mantle, drew his hat over his brows, and noiselessly hurried from the chamber; scarce daring to breathe until he had reached the open street; and, unobserved, took his station at the opposite side, with his keen eye fixed upon the door of the Carbrie—into whose well lighted passage he could clearly see. In this position his vigilance was not long unrewarded—for he beheld Garvey slowly enter the open lobby, communicating with the street—and peep, stealthily, with many a shrug and shiver, forth upon the wild and angry sky, while he drew his muffling still closer about him. At last, however, he plunged into the unsheltered street; and O'Gara kept pace with him at the other side, until he saw him fairly into Mr. Coyle's sombre and sinister-looking *auberge*. Having crossed the street, through the small, lozenge-shaped window panes, he beheld, after a short delay, the swollen and sallow innkeeper, withdraw in company with Garvey; and having thus ascertained to his entire satisfaction what he had already suspected, the young priest hurried away through the storm and darkness—intent upon a project, in whose execution he was resolved that neither storm nor darkness, nor another agency should defeat or dismay him.

Meanwhile it behoves us for one moment to glance at the gloomy cell, in the Birmingham Tower, which was occupied by Sir Hugh Willoughby, who now sate wholly alone in his dimly-lighted and desolate cell. His ruminations, painful and gloomy as they were, were nevertheless disagreeably interrupted by the jarring prelude of bolt and bar, which announced yet another visiter. It was the official of the prison who entered—and with a hesitating and embarrassed manner, and a countenance somewhat pale, stood in uneasy silence at the door. There was something sinister in his aspect and demeanour which impressed Sir Hugh with a feeling akin to dismay: the old knight looked inquiringly in his face for some time before the ominous messenger spoke.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby?" said the man, glancing at the open page in a soiled and heavy volume in his hands.

"The same," said Sir Hugh, affirmatively.

"Under sentence of death for high treason," continued the officer, still reading.

"The same—pray, proceed," urged the knight.

"And reprieved during the king's pleasure?"

"Ay, ay—the same," pursued the old man.

"You know, sir," he said, sulkily, after a brief pause, and turning his eyes another way; "you know, sir, *I* have nothing to do with it; my duty is only what you see," he added, apologetically; "I try to make gentlemen as comfortable as I'm able, while they're here; and they're all welcome to stay here as long as they like, for my part—but, sir, but——"

"Speak plainly, man, for God's sake—have you any ill news to tell me?" urged Sir Hugh, in a tone which betrayed his terrible misgivings.

The man evidently was a novice at his business—at least in its sterner department—for he appeared much disconcerted at this direct appeal; and not knowing exactly how to begin, paused and shuffled for some time, in evident embarrassment, at the door.

"You see, sir," he resumed, after some seconds had elapsed in silence; "I'm only under orders, and has no choice in the business—and after all, why, we must all of us go sooner or later, you know—and then all's even——"

"For God's sake," said Sir Hugh, "speak the worst, and at once—is it—is it *to-morrow?*"

"To-morrow, sir, at twelve o'clock—you just hit it," answered he, much relieved; "twelve o'clock, sir—an' you're not to be quartered—that's one comfort, at any rate. The warrant is gone to the sheriff, sir—and it's my business, you see, to let you know."

"God's will be done," said Sir Hugh, in a voice scarce audible, while his head sunk, and he clasped his hands together, with a convulsive pressure—"God's will be done."

"I'll be in in the mornin' again, sir, at six o'clock; and maybe you'd want a word with the clargy, or a scratch of the pen, by the way of a will," pursued the man; "and if you'd wish every thing properly attended to, and moderate charges, I have a cousin, an undertaker, that does funerals for the first quality in the land, sir; and I hope your honour found everything to your liking here, sir, while you were in it. My wife is makin' up the little account—and it will be time enough to settle it in the mornin'."

The man stood for a moment or two in the doorway; but seeing that his presence was unheeded, he forbore to say anything further; and casting an official glance round the room, to ascertain that all was right, he closed the book, and tucking it under his arm, disappeared amid the ringing of keys and the clang and creak of the iron fastenings.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MURDER.

Now turn we once more to Garvey, whom we followed upon his short excursion into "the King's Head."

"Nobody in the house—no strangers, I suppose?" asked Garvey, stealthily, as soon as he found himself safe within the dingy precincts which acknowledged the dominion of Peter Coyle.

"No one but *that*," said the host, testily pointing with his thumb toward his helpmate, who sate, as usual, dozing in her chair—and at the same time shooting at her a glance of the blackest malignity; "no one but that—and she's one too many; for, of all the brimstone spawn that I ever came across, that same she-devil flogs them. Curse her," he continued, waxing energetic as he proceeded; "I have no rest night or day with her; I dare not sleep in the house alone with her, without lock and bar between us—the murdering hag; it's but last night I had a tussle with her for the razor, or she'd have had me in kingdom come, like the doctor, I take it—as it is, she's scarce left a finger on my hand, the she-butcher!"

As he thus spoke, with truculent emphasis, he shook the member in question, swathed about in bloody rags, in deadly menace at the slumberer.

"She's set her scheming headpiece to work now, to find out who it is I have got above—but you may as well let that alone, murdering Mag, for as bould as you are; you may—for if you're determined, so am I; and have a care—for long threatening comes at last—and if you put me to it, I'll go through with it; and then, who will you have to thank but yourself, my darling?"

As he thus apostrophized the tipsy sleeper, he busied himself in trimming the candle, and making himself ready to accompany Mr. Garvey, by throwing on his loose coat; and this done, the two worthies began to ascend the crazy and darksome stairs—sometimes startled by the scampering of the rats down the shadowy corridors, and sometimes more awfully by the roar of the thunder. Altogether, the expedition had in it something so strange and even so ghastly, that Mr. Garvey, as he followed his villainous-looking conductor through deserted, damp-stained lobbies, and up half-rotten stairs, to the chamber where the helpless victim of violence and villainy was lying, felt himself growing indescribably nervous and uncomfortable.

"Didn't you hear a step on the stair," asked Coyle, pausing with a look of something between wrath and horror, at the door, when their dreary ramble terminated; histh—listen."

"No, no, God bless us all; no, nothing of the sort," said Garvey, hurriedly; "come here quick—don't keep us standing in this cursed place all night; turn the key, will you, and let us in; see, let me in first," he added, glancing nervously back into the darkness; "though, egad, no—go on yourself, the lady may be—God bless us she may be *dead;* I hear no sounds within, eh!"

"Well, what if she is," said Coyle, with an ugly forced smile, and a real shudder, "sure moping Molly's there, at all events, and she's not dead, I take it."

He turned the key in the door, and they entered a wretched damp-stained apartment, in the further end of which a door stood partially open, and a faint light gleamed through the aperture. Treading cautiously, he scarce knew why, Coyle led the way to the chamber of sickness, perhaps of death.

Cowering over a wretched fire, sate the half-witted girl, the sole attendant of the unhappy lady—a pale, withered, smoke-dried creature, with smirched face, and filthy hands and arms, muttering and jabbering to herself, and stealing looks of idiotic malevolence and jealousy toward the intruders.

"She's asleep—asleep only," whispered Coyle, pointing to the bed; "the coverlet moves with the breathing—see it; but histh!" he added, grasping Garvey by the arm, "I *do* hear a step coming—if it's flesh or blood, it's that rip of hell; she's at her tricks, histh! here—sure enough, here she comes—she's resolved she or I must go under the daisies, the red burning villain."

Thus speaking, Coyle waddled swiftly to the outer door, and just as he passed it, and took his stand upon the lobby, the tall form of his repulsive help-mate glided into the passage from the stair-head, and advanced, with a slight degree of unsteadiness, and with many a sinister grin and toss of the head, carrying a candle in one hand, and, as her husband descried, much to his uneasiness, a case knife in the other.

"Well," said Coyle, in a tone whose gruffness but imperfectly disguised its trepidation, "what in the fiend's name are you after now? did not I tell you to keep below, eh? did not I warn you against this floor?—yes or no?"

"An' who cares if you did," said she, with an ominous grin, while her face glowed absolutely scarlet, with the combined excitement of whiskey and wrath, "why you lump of gallows carrion, is it for you I'd turn drudge in my own house?—do you think I'm afeard of your knuckles, you coward? Aye, shake your fist as long as you like, but dar to touch me, as much as with a finger, and that minute I'll let the light into your puddens."

As she thus spoke she continued to advance, and when she came to the concluding threat she flourished the knife and uttered a kind of hiss through her gapped and carious teeth, which might have rivalled the sibilations of an awakened viper.

"Keep back, I tell you, or I'll make you," he ejaculated, with all the vehemence of fear.

"Keep back yourself," she cried, with another flourish of the weapon she carried, "keep out of my way—back with you, for into that room I'll go this night or I'll know the reason why."

As she spoke the virago advanced with an infernal glare upon the unwieldy sentinel, who watched her motions, in return, with a gaze of mingled fear and rage. As she came up to him he propped his broad shoulders resolutely against the door-post, and drawing up his sinewy leg, received her upon his clouted heel with a kick, so well aimed and vigorous that she reeled back to the end of the passage, and stood, with lack-lustre eyes and livid face, gaping and gasping against the wall.

"Ha, ha! take that, young woman," cried he, with brutal exultation, "your tongue doesn't wag quite so glib now, I'm thinking."

He was interrupted, however, before he could complete his triumphant apostrophe, for, recovering her breath, the enraged and murderous hag hurled herself rather than rushed upon him, and dashed the knife at his throat; it ripped the skin from his chin to his ear, but nothing more, and, scarce knowing what he did, he swung her from him against the side wall, and then sprung backward to secure himself from a repetition of the assault, behind the door. Ere he could close it, however, the drunken beldame had thrust her head, shoulder, and one arm through the aperture, and with eyes whose deadly gleam lent new vigour to his terrified resistance, while the veins of her forehead actually stood out with the prominence of knotted cordage, she tugged and strained at the door with the frenzied exertion of a strength which tasked that of her bleeding spouse to the uttermost. As thus they strove her foot slipped, and she would have fallen across the threshold had not the door closed, with the full pressure of Coyle's whole strength and weight, across her neck, and held her thus suspended and helpless. Setting his knee and his shoulder still more firmly against the planks, he strained the door with strangling pressure upon the throat of the wretched woman, watching the gradual blackening and quivering of her frightful face, with an expression half vindictive and half horrified.

"Let it go man, let it go Coyle," cried Garvey, who saw enough to fill him with horror, "let it go, I tell you, for God's sake," and in the impatience of his terror and irresolution, he actually wrung his hands, and danced upon the floor. "Coyle, Coyle, are you mad? don't you see? she's black—she's dead; let go—its murder; I tell you let go."

Coyle, meanwhile, kept staring with the same expression, at once malignant and appalled, upon the gaping, livid face of his victim, while he still continued to exert the whole pressure of his deadly weight.

And this scene of hate and murder, enacted at the very threshold of death, and under the awful voice of heaven's thunder!

"I hear voices, and steps too; voices and steps—they are coming," cried Garvey, "come here Molly—moping Molly—for God's sake, Molly, bear witness; I had nothing to do with it. Coyle, remember it was all your own doing; my good little precious girl, you saw it all. Oh! my God, is there no way out—is there no way out?" and, as he spoke, he ran and rummaged round the room, in the vain hope of finding some mode of exit.

Coyle, meanwhile, heard the approaching sounds; in breathless alarm he retreated from the fatal door—down fell the hideous burthen which it had sustained—the knees drawn up to the chest in the last mortal spasm—and all still and grim in the frightful blackness of death.

"They're coming," he muttered, with an oath, "Margery get up—get up girl," he continued, thrusting the body with his foot. "Hell and death she's gone—she's done for; lend a hand Garvey, you helpless muff you, lend a hand and haul her under the bed!"

It was too late, however, for any such precautionary measures. O'Gara, accompanied by half-a-dozen musketeers of the militia, were now upon the passage; retreat or concealment was alike out of the question. The arrest of the murderer, and the deliverance of the imprisoned lady, were already virtually effected.

CHAPTER XL.

THE HOUR OF DEATH.

Next morning Caleb Crooke, his wrinkled forehead surmounted by a velvet cap, from under which a few scant white locks escaped, and his keen grey eyes peering through the spring spectacles which compressed his nostrils, at a letter which he had but just opened, sate in his usual chair of state, before a desk piled with papers and parchments. Directly opposite to him, and almost as grimy as the dingy wainscoating of the dark apartment, sate his confidential clerk—a lank, starch, sanctimonious looking gentleman, somewhere about fifty, and with a slight squint, which made his face anything but a "letter of recommendation." This sallow and somewhat sinister looking official, pursued his scrivenery in industrious taciturnity, and without ever raising his eyes for a moment, except to dip his pen in the ink, on which occasion, as often as it occurred, he shot a single stealthy glance at his employer's countenance, and forthwith again applied himself to his monotonous task.

Crooke had no sooner concluded the letter, than he shook his head, sighed, and muttered some half-dozen bitter ejaculations within himself, then rose in great trouble, and having taken a turn or two up and down the chamber, exclaimed—

"This is the sorest blow of all—the deed destroyed!—and just at such a time—the villains—the robbers!"

And with these broken exclamations, he stood sometimes scratching his head, sometimes wringing his hands, the very image of perplexity and dismay.

"Well," said he, at last, "I all along had my suspicions of that sneaking dog of a priest—what possessed me to disregard them? Good heaven, why did I trust him—why was I mad enough to trust him? trust a priest, and with such a commission! I ought to be kicked, and cursed, and burnt for it."

The door opened at this moment, and the priest himself, Father O'Gara, entered the room.

The constrained, suspicious, and disconcerting reception which awaited him, was so far from repelling the young ecclesiastic, that without awaiting even the ceremony of an invitation, he seated himself, and at once opened the subject of his visit. The conversation that ensued was long, animated, and earnest. Its results we need not here detail; suffice it for the present to remark, that before it had proceeded for more than five minutes, the grimy clerk on a sudden remembered a notice which he had forgotten to serve, and with his principal's permission, hurried out of the room.

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Meanwhile a scene of agony, almost of terror, the last farewell of two beings, who had been for many a year to each other dearer than all the world beside, filled Sir Hugh's dark and desolate cell with sobs, and prayers, and blessings. We shall not attempt to describe it.

And now the hour of noon drew near—the awful hour which was to consign Sir Hugh Willoughby to the hands of the executioner. Every stir in the castle-yard, every sound upon the stairs, was listened to in the breathless agony of suspense, by his distracted child; every coming moment was dreaded as the herald of the officers of death. Pale, but calm and resigned, the old man sat in his grim prison, whose damps and gloom might meetly have foreshadowed the chill shadows of the tomb to which he was hurrying. In prayer he had sought and found that heroism which more nobly, and far more securely than human pride and resolution, can sustain the heart of man through the terrors of such a scene.

In misery uncontrollable, and wildest despair, poor Grace wept, and trembled, and clung to him, and sobbed, like a creature bereft of reason; and through these dreadful moments, the brave old man strove, though in vain, by words of fortitude and comfort, to calm the wild transports of her breaking heart.

At length the dreaded sounds were actually heard. The ill-omened scream of the rusty lock, the clang and rattle of chains and bars, along with gruff voices upon the passage, the door itself rolled back, and the gaoler entered; but oh! praised be heaven, is it possible—with a REPRIEVE!

Yes, Sir Hugh Willoughby, though still under sentence, and a prisoner as before, is again reprieved until the king's further pleasure shall be known.

Oh! who can describe the overwhelming delirium of joy which welcomed this unlooked for respite, and in the intoxication of deliverance from present ruin, hailed the precarious boon with all the rapturous ecstacy which might have greeted an entire deliverance in the king's full pardon.

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The first rapture of his sudden rescue had for some time subsided, and in calmer happiness now, Sir Hugh and his darling child mingled their smiles and tears, as hand locked in hand, the kind words and fond looks of dearest affection were exchanged between them;

when once more the prison door flew open, and breathless with eagerness and haste, old Caleb Crooke, supported by O'Gara and Torlogh O'Brien, stood in the scanty light which struggled through the bars of the dungeon.

"My dear old patron—my admirable friend—worthy knight," cried Crooke, scarce intelligibly, through want of breath and extreme vehemence, while the tears, spite of all his efforts, coursed one another down his rugged cheeks, "I'll never forgive you; how could you think of being hanged, without letting your agent, and honest, trusty, humble old friend Caleb Crooke, whose fortune you made, and whose fortune and whose self you have as good a right to command as if they were, in fact, as they are in right, and in gratitude, your own—without letting him know a word about it; confound me, confound me, I say, if I ever forgive it."

As he thus spoke, he wrung his old benefactor's two hands in his own, with a vehemence which was all but dislocating.

"But it's all settled, now," he continued, with unabated impetuosity "all settled, all right—the deed—the settlement that was burnt, you know—but, no, you don't know—egad, I forgot, but no matter—it's found again—that is—not it—but an attested copy, which is all one you know; and—and—"

Here honest Caleb was taken with so obstinate a fit of coughing, that he became utterly unintelligible; and O'Gara, consulting the anxiety of his hearers, and undeterred by Crooke's deprecatory gestures, took upon him the office of spokesman forthwith, and thus proceeded :—

"And to the preservation and discovery of this deed, under God, you are indebted for your reprieve—and for more, for your perfect security against ever suffering the execution of the sentence under which you lie. The wretches who conspired your death aimed in reality at your estate, and finding that *that* is limited to another on your death, are resolved to enjoy it at least during your life; and to extend the term of this enjoyment, they, of course, desire to protract that life, with which it ends. But, sir, there is more——"

"Let *me*—let *me*—young gentleman—let *me*," insisted Crooke, who had now recovered breath—and, with gentle violence, pushing back the young priest with his open hand, he continued—"yes, indeed, there *is* more, as he said—a great deal more. This young man—this Colonel Torlogh O'Brien, has behaved—I will say it, though he nods and frowns at me all the while—*nobly*, ay, sir, nobly. The French court had, it seems, long since promised him their interest, in seeking the restitution of his Irish ancestral patrimony—of which you know Glindarragh is a chief portion. The ambassador was prepared to press this upon the king—but he has waived his claim to your forfeited life interest, on condition that you shall be liberated, immediately, upon bail. The terms are agreed to—and at this moment, the necessary bonds are being drawn up. I ought to add—because the thing tells handsomely for him—that Colonel Sarsfield requested to be your second bail—so, please God, by to-morrow morning, you shall be once more a free man."

What followed, we need not detail—nor yet all that passed between the beautiful Grace Willoughby, and the brave and handsome soldier, whose proud but generous heart she had irrevocably won.

Torlogh O'Brien remained with Sir Hugh until the hour arrived, when the prison rules of Dublin Castle obliged Grace Willoughby to leave her father for the night; and, accompanied by her woman, she took her leave, and returned in a coach to her apartments in the Carbrie. There we shall leave her, in the deep solitude and silence of the night, to commune with her own heart—and to calm, if possible, the tumult of its sweet and bitter emotions and remembrances.

The young soldier, being thus alone with Sir Hugh, opened fully to him the purport of his interview with Grace in the castle garden. Deeply, however, to his mortification and disappointment, the young man found his proposal coldly, though not unkindly, listened to. Sir Hugh Willoughby had his pride and reserve as well as Torlogh O'Brien; and in his fallen fortunes he could not bear the thought that his family should be beholden, either for rank or wealth, to the generous forgiveness of an hereditary foe. The strong and unfavourable prejudices with which he had at first regarded Colonel O'Brien, had, it is needless to say, long since entirely disappeared; but his present humbled position was not the attitude in which to entertain an offer, which, in his eyes, wore too much the appearance of an obligation.

Pained and chagrined, though not actually offended at what, under all the circumstances, seemed to him the unreasonable conduct of the knight, Torlogh O'Brien was constrained to take his departure with a heart still troubled with perplexing doubts, and dark anxieties for the future.

"Well, Sir Hugh Willoughby," he said, with a proud but melancholy air; "to speak frankly, I did not anticipate so cold an answer to my suit; it pains me the more that I may not see you for many months again. To-night I proceed to take, in person, the command of my regiment; and so it is even possible, in times so troublous and uncertain as the present, I may never see you more. Farewell, Sir Hugh—farewell—we part, at least, as friends."

As Torlogh O'Brien rode slowly through the moonlit streets, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, he found himself under the walls of the now quiet Carbrie; and, as his eye wandered on among the gables, and vanes, and projecting beam-heads, which varied the front of the antique structure, something more than the romantic influence of the misty moonshine, under which the old fabric was shimmering, induced him to draw bridle, and break the rapid pace of his steed into a walk. He checked even this moderate motion, as he reached that part of the mansion in which Sir Hugh's lodgings were situated, and looked up, with passionate regret, to the quaint casements, within which he knew his beautiful Grace was, even at that moment, mayhap, thinking of her own true lover.

At such an hour, and under such circumstances, of course he dared not ask to see her; and once more he was about to put his horse in motion, and pursue his melancholy night ride, when a light gleamed from an open lattice, and a small hand was extended to close it. When did a lover's eye deceive him? At the first glimpse of the form thus casually revealed, his heart swelled in his bosom—and with graceful gallantry, he raised his plumed hat. The gesture caught her eye, for she looked down upon him—then hastily withdrew, and then as hastily returned. Pressing his hand to his heart, as he looked upward at the loved form but dimly visible, he said, in the low, thrilling tones of deepest passion, only the words—"till death—till death." She waved her hand —lingered for one moment, and in the next was gone.

For a minute and more he continued to gaze, locked in fond fascination, upon the now darkened casement, where he had seen, but for a moment, the loved form and face which haunted his imagination every hour, in day-thoughts and in dreams; then sighing, he drew his hat upon his brows with something of a scornful mien.

"Till death," he said, "ay, till death; and unless this hand hath lost its cunning," and he raised his gauntlet-gloved right hand, "and unless thou, my brave Roland, hast lost thy fire and mettle, death may still be many a year removed; and if it be—in spite of fate, she shall at last be mine—on—on—let us on—danger hath been our comrade through many a rough year—and if, through those that are to come, thou bearest thy master well and safely as before, then what power on earth can keep her from me—away, away, my brave Roland."

As though he understood his master's words, the noble steed pricked his ears, and snorting, broke into a plunging canter; nor was the reverie in which the young soldier was lost for one moment interrupted until it was dispelled by the challenge of the sentinel at St. James's gate.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE FAREWELL.

A few nights later Sir Hugh Willoughby, now once more a free man, was pacing with agitated steps the floor of his apartment, adjoining the Carbrie. His cloak and hat lay ready, upon a chair, to be donned at a moment's notice. His face was pale, and wore a character of mingled anxiety and grief, as in manifest impatience he glanced from time to time at his watch, and listened for the sound of foot-falls or of voices at the door. He had communicated the nature of his engagement, whatever it might be, to no one; simply stating that business would call him forth upon that evening, and directing that so soon as a gentleman at the street door should inquire for him, he should be at once apprised of his arrival.

The night was unusually dark; and as it wore on, Sir Hugh's uneasiness visibly increased. Dark as it was, he frequently looked from the windows, in the vain endeavour to penetrate its gloom, and would then in silence resume his restless walk, with, if possible, increased agitation and dejection. In all this there was a mystery, which, however much it might pique her curiosity, or however nearly it might interest even higher feelings, his fair daughter attempted not to penetrate. She saw that the old knight was resolved that the purpose of his melancholy and agitating expedition should remain unknown; and she sought not to trouble him with inquiries which might possibly offend.

At length a smart knocking at the chamber door announced that a gentleman awaited Sir High at the entrance. In silent haste the old knight did on his cloak and hat; took his daughter tenderly by the hand, and kissed her; then, having gazed in her face for some moments with a look of melancholy irresolution, as though he were uncertain whether or not to speak some matter that weighed heavily upon his mind, he turned abruptly from her with a sigh, and hurried from the chamber, leaving her, if possible, more than ever anxious and perplexed. We must follow the knight down the stair-case of the old house, which he traversed with the heavy tread of age, and forth into the dark and now comparatively deserted streets. A single form, wrapped like his own in a mantle, awaited his approach, close to the entrance of the house.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby?" said the stranger, inquiringly, "Ay, sir; the same," answered the knight dejectedly. "I thank you for keeping tryste with me. Shall we now proceed?"

"If you desire it. We can easily have a coach," said the stranger. "I fear you will find the way somewhat longer than you reckon upon."

"No, no," answered the old man, hastily. "I would be entirely private; none but thou and I shall know of this visit. God grant me courage for the mournful—the terrible interview. Let us on—let us on, my good friend; I pray, thee, let us on."

"Then lean, at least, upon my arm," responded his companion.

The old knight accepted the proffered courtesy, and thus in silence they began to thread the dark and sinuous ways, which, diverging from the high street, in a southerly direction, soon lost themselves in a confused labyrinth of narrow and complicated lanes, among which Sir Hugh followed the guidance of his companion.

Pursuing their way thus steadily and in silence, the two pedestrians at length arrived at a deserted and desolate-looking place, where the street which they followed became gradually thinly-built and broken, and at last terminated in a lonely area, in whose foreground were visible only some partially constructed or half-ruinous fragments of houses, while behind them loomed, in a heavy mass, against the gloomy, starless sky, the peaked gables and ponderous chimneys of a massive old mansion, with a few scattered and tufted trees dimly grouped around it.

We have already introduced the reader to this desolate-looking tenement—the same in which, we have seen, in an earlier chapter of this tale, Miles Garrett and O'Gara confronted, in resolute and fiery debate, about the poor heart-broken lady, who had found, in her misery, but one human friend.

"We must be near it now," said Sir Hugh, in an agitated whisper; for the clang of arms, and the challenging of the guard at some little distance, borne to his ears upon the night breeze, assured him that they had well nigh reached the extreme verge of the city.

"Yonder is the house," answered O'Gara, for he was the knight's conductor; "yonder is the house; and I should have called earlier to guide you hither, had it not been that she—the poor lady—was asleep, and the honest woman who attends her prayed me to await her waking, which I did. Here, then, ends our walk."

They now stood beneath the dark walls of the sombre mansion; and the priest, applying a latch-key, effected their entrance, without any other sound than that of gently opening and closing again the massive portal; and thus they found themselves cautiously mounting the broad staircase, in unbroken silence. A dim light, burning upon the lobby, showed them the door of a chamber, into which the priest, with a sorrowful countenance, slowly entered; and the old man, with head inclined and broken steps, followed like one in a dream.

From an inner door, at the farther end of the apartment, a decent looking female looked in upon them, and, beckoning her to him, O'Gara asked—

"Does she wake or sleep now?"

"She's awake ever since you left," answered the attendant, in a whisper; and, with a shake of the head, she added—"and her next sleep, I'm afeard, will be a long one. Poor thing!—it's nearly over with her now!"

"Go down stairs, my good woman, and wait there until I call you," said the priest, gently, "for she must now consult the peace of her troubled mind, and we need to be undisturbed."

Without speaking, the woman promptly and reverently obeyed. The chamber door was closed, and O'Gara, returning from the sick-room, whither he had gone alone for a moment, said:—

"Come, Sir Hugh, she expects you."

The old knight followed him almost mechanically into the chamber of death.

There lay, upon the bed which he approached, the wreck of that beauty of which he had once been so proud—all that now remained of the young and happy bride he had loved so fondly. At sight of him—remembered, oh, how well, through all the blighting changes of griefs and years!—the wasted form started up in the bed, and, with one piercing scream, clasped her poor thin hands across her eyes.

"Oh, let me kneel—let me kneel—help me to kneel!" she cried, struggling ineffectually to rise from the bed, and, stretching her wasted arms imploringly towards him—"Oh, Hugh! Hugh!" she cried again, clasping her hands over her face, and sinking forward in the bed, with the weakness of coming death—she presented such a type of heart-broken agony and humility as must have touched a Stoic.

The old man wept bitterly; and for a long time, through his sobs, could only repeat—

"Poor Marian! poor Marian!"

After a long silence, the poor creature struggled again to speak—

"Oh, Hugh, I dare not ask you to forgive me *now;* but after I am gone, Hugh, will you forgive me then? Will you wipe away the remembrance of all the misery and sorrows, and think of the times—the old times—when you saw me first, Hugh—the happy times, that *you* can remember without remorse?"

The old man wept so bitterly that he could not answer

"All I dare to ask, Hugh, is that, when I am dead and gone, you will sometimes try and think of those days, and remember me as if I died then—died in those happy times!"

Crying as if his heart would break, the old man could not answer, but took the cold, emaciated hand of her whom he had once loved so well, and pressed it, and wrung it in his own, while he sobbed and wept on still in silence.

Oh! who could describe, what words can tell, the wild scream of fearful joy and wonder that broke from her at that touch?

"My hand! my hand! Oh, God Almighty!—he holds my hand again! I am forgiven! I am forgiven!"

And as she spoke, the fountain of her tears was opened, and with a long, deep shiver, she lay weeping and sobbing, as though her poor heart would burst.

"Poor, poor Marian," said the old man, still crying and wringing her hand as he spoke, "you *are* forgiven—you are indeed forgiven. Oh, Marian, Marian, I never thought to have seen you thus." And they both wept on for a time in silence.

"And the child, Hugh?" she said at last, in a tone which, though almost a whisper, yet cut him to the heart.

"Is well and very beautiful; like, very like what you were Marian," he answered, while his tears flowed on; but perceiving that the grasp with which she had tremblingly clung to his was fast growing cold and feeble, he added, pressing her hand as he had once pressed that selfsame hand in scenes and times how different—

"Marian, Marian, my poor Marian, would it comfort you to see her?"

"Oh no," she answered, desolately, but very gently, "no, no, I am unworthy; I could not—no, no. But," she continued, after a while, with a most mournful humility, "I have one last request—my jewels—they are under the pillow—take them, Hugh, and give them to her, and when you see them on her you will may be—*may be*, sometimes think of me—and of my penitence, and the mercy you showed me; and then, too, may be you will look back, in memory, to the better times, when poor, lost Marian wore them herself—won't you come again to-morrow, Hugh; for I am too weak to tell you all to-night—you'll come again and see me in the morning, won't you, and though my heart is broken—broken, Hugh, I'll cry with very joy to see you when you come. You're not going yet. Press my hand again—hold me, Hugh; oh, let me feel your hand. Forgiven, thank God—all forgiven, all forgiven."

Murmuring these words, she sank gently, gently into sleep—it was the last long sleep ; his hand still locked in hers, and the tears still wet upon her long, dark lashes. Yes, poor Marian!—the troubled spirit and weary head at last sleep sound and sweetly. There is no more sorrow and contempt for thee. Poor fallen lady! the pangs of grief, the dreams of old times, will flutter thy poor heart no more. No sting of contumely will ever tinge that pale cheek—no old remembrance, stealing like soft music o'er thee, will ever wet thy lids with tears again. The last thou wilt ever shed lie glittering there serenely. Yes, hold that thin hand still, Sir Hugh, and look in that pale face; though it knows thee not—though it will never smile even on *thee* again—what sight and touch will ever stir thy heart like these! Could tongues of angels plead with thy proud heart with half the eloquence of that cold, fixed face?—could a giant's grasp shake thee like the chill touch of that little hand?

Hour after hour, in the silent chamber of death, by the side of that last sad relic of her whom he had once loved so proudly and so fondly, sat old Sir Hugh, heedless of all, save the yearnings and the grief that swelled at this roubled heart, and the remembrances that gathered round him like a dream, as he gazed on the still and mournful features of the dead.

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The same morning sun that shone upon Sir Hugh, and marked with its rosy greeting the pale couch of death, streamed upon a very different scene by the old bridge of Glindarragh.

It was the first parting of a young and beautiful girl from her husband; and that husband—whom, gentle reader, will you guess him to have been? Who but Percy Neville. Yes, Percy Neville—at last constrained to bid, let us hope but a *brief*, farewell to his lovely young bride, sweet Phebe. How often has he stood, with his foot in the stirrup, and how often has he disappointed his impatient steed, to return, and snatch one last word, one last kiss more—to breathe another assurance, fervent and tender, of speedy return and unchanging love—while, one hand round her waist, the other locked in hers, he looks passionately into the dark, tearful eyes, and pale lovely face, of the simple rustic beauty he has wooed and won. How many a fond prayer and loving word her soft voice murmurs, as her little head lies so trustingly buried in his breast. At length, however, the *last* of all—his last words are spoken indeed. Away he clatters, still turning as he goes, and waving his hand, in token of adieu, to the weeping girl, whose fond looks follow, until at last the distance hides him; and he is gone—quite gone.

CHAPTER XLII.

LOVE AND GLORY.

FAST as old Time sweeps in his swarth, fresh weeds and flowers spring up beneath his scythe.—Old actors pass away and are forgotten, and new ones take their places. Thus, as the current of our tale flows on, we lose sight, and mayhap for ever, of many a familiar personage and place, while strange faces and new objects rise around us, as we drift onward toward the close. A year has passed—the sunshine, and the rains, and winds of a long year have fallen upon the grave of Lady Willoughby. Sir Hugh—landless now and homeless—still, with his fair child, dwells in the same lodging where we saw him last. To attempt to leave the city were, under existing circumstances, a dangerous, if not an impracticable enterprise. Stern proclamations, dictated by the dread urgency of the impending crisis, and enforced by the prompt and atrocious sanctions of military law, restricted all suspected persons to the immediate neighbourhood of their dwellings, and in the majority of cases had even placed them under the rigours of actual imprisonment.

It were difficult indeed, to convey an adequate idea of the intense and agitating excitement which pervaded those of every class, who, either from necessity or choice, were still resident in Ireland, during this season of doubt and danger, when the crisis of that awful martial struggle whose issue was to determine the hopes and fears of all, was obviously at hand. The imminent proximity of a catastrophe so momentous and uncertain stimulated and darkened every alternating passion—the hatred, the ambition, the suspicions, the hopes, and the alarms of all. As the struggle became more distinctly a military one, the savage spirit of martial despotism more and more unequivocally characterised and governed the whole policy of the Jacobite executive. The extremest severities were practised, as we have said, against the defenceless Protestants, whose creed was assumed to be a sufficient evidence of their Whig predilections; and these severities were aggravated a thousand-fold by the licentious violence of the half-disciplined troops to whom their administration was committed.

It was the eve of the first of July, 1690, that memorable day on which was fought the battle of the Boyne. The old city of Dublin was now comparatively deserted. Scarce a red coat was to be seen in its gloomy and shattered streets; a handful of militia kept guard at the Castle, which had sent forth its king, with all his goodly company of generals and courtiers, either to take an active part in the long-deferred struggle, or to witness its issue as spectators. The stillness and languor of the town, contrasted with the recent hubbub and bustle attending the transit of thousands of stern and reckless soldiery, upon their march to the scene of danger, had in it something at once depressing and indefinably exciting. Upon the fortunes of the coming battle each party felt that their destinies were suspended. The hushed and agitating prevalence of a suspense, which came home not only to the soldier and the politician, but to every private man, in the shape of alarm for his property and his safety, pervaded every street and dwelling, and clouded every countenance in the city with awe. Business was entirely neglected; men kept restlessly to-ing and fro-ing, and grouping together in little knots, gossiping at the street corners, in low tones, and laughing strangely, in the almost hysterical excitement of the crisis—the long-looked-for crisis, that was now at last, in fearful earnest, indeed, present and upon them.

A tall and singularly handsome officer of dragoons, fully equipped in the splendid uniform of those days, and wearing in his face an expression at once lofty and melancholy, was, upon the night in question, ascending a dark and old-fashioned stair in the city of Dublin. He paused at a door, which opened from the first landing-place. A feeling which he could not for a moment overcome, held him doubtfully at the threshold. He entered, however, and, raising his plumed hat, and shaking back from his noble features his long black hair, Torlogh O'Brien stood in the presence of Grace Willoughby and her father.

How did her shifting colour show the beating of her little heart, as, between smiles and blushes, she greeted her true lover! How did the soldier's eyes, with the passionate fire of his own fierce and melancholy nature, requite her softer looks!

"Sir Hugh," he said, having with a melancholy smile returned the old man's greeting, in language not less generous, "it is long—to me how long!—since I have seen you, and it *may* be long, very long, ere I see you again." And he glanced towards the fair girl with a fondness all the more touching for the stern and haughty beauty of his face. 'I have but a few hurried moments to stay here. I cannot, and will not, waste words. What is so near my heart must be spoken—spoken perchance, with a soldier's bluntness, but yet with the feeling that all my hopes, my happiness, are wound up in your answer. You remember—you cannot have forgotten—our conversation on the evening when I saw you last. Sir Hugh, it is no light fancy, no trivial feeling, that could lead Torlogh O'Brien thus to sue on in spite of a repulse. I love your daughter—Mistress Grace—I love her dearly—desperately—with all the love and all the loyalty—with every feeling, and passion, and thought, and hope of my heart;—say, if I outlive to-morrow's battle, will you at last consent, and give her to the fondest and truest lover that ever yet in honour and devotion sued for the hand of maiden?"

Sir Hugh was shaken. He looked at his daughter, and then at the noble face of the handsome soldier, and then once more at his own loved child.

"Torlogh, Torlogh O'Brien, she has been my only child—my darling," he said at last, in a broken voice; and the tears, which the dangers of adverse fortune had never yet wrung from his eyes, began to gather thick, and coursed one another down his furrowed cheeks as he spoke—"She has been the comfort, the stay, the pride of my old age; she has been, indeed—indeed—a good child to me; and if, she loves you, why should *I* mar her happiness or yours. Let her, then, choose now and for ever for herself."

"Grace, dearest Grace, you hear him," said Torlogh, passionately turning to her: "Say but one word; deign but one smile; consent but by a look, and flood with joy the heart that loves you well—the heart that by to-morrow night *may* beat no more."

The last words of his appeal smote home to her true heart—the bashful struggles of timidity were over in a moment.

"Oh, Torlogh, Torlogh!" she wildly cried; and, pale and sobbing, the light form of the noble girl, in a moment, lay folded fondly and trustingly to the heart of the soldier.

We need not follow to its close that hurried but eventful interview, nor say how the old man kissed his beautiful and blushing child; how fondly he blessed them both, and how he pressed their hands together. After many and many a fond farewell, at last he was gone, indeed; and even the receding clang of his charger's hoofs sank into silence.

Thus Torlogh O'Brien, in wild and happy ecstacy of triumph, rode rapidly towards the camp of King James, and never thought the while that fortune may interpose "full many a slip between the cup and the lip."

While Torlogh O'Brien, thus absorbed in glorious reveries spurs onward towards "the tented field," we shall avail ourselves of the interval, unwilling as we are to interrupt his entranced and happy silence, to say a few words touching the progress of events, which, we trust, may suffice to give the reader some general notion of the actual state of things at the period at which we have now taken up our tale. If, however, as is by no means impossible, the gentle reader care marvellously little for such dissertations, he can easily escape the present by what is technically termed "skipping" the next dozen or so lines.

The presence of William's powerful and splendidly-organized army in the North, and the arrival of the Prince himself to take their head, had stimulated the fierce excitement of the country, and intensified by the darkest forebodings the inveterate malignity of old feuds and jealousies. The exhausting fiscal exertions which the state was forced to make, the prostration, or rather the ruin of all trade, the general neglect of tillage, and the frightful waste committed by the rapparees, had so devastated the country, that famine, and its attendant pestilence, threatened, with the invading sword, to consummate the desolation of the land.

In addition to all this, the cause of the unfortunate James had sustained sore loss more directly still, by multitudinous desertions, which transferred in detail much of the energy and influence of the Jacobite party, to the camp of the invader. With few exceptions, indeed, such apostacies were confined to men of second-rate importance and ability; but still the traitors, however individually despicable, disheartened the faithful by their numbers, and almost invariably carried with them intelligence of the weakness, the apprehensions, and the plans of their former associates, which proved valuable to their opponents.

Among many better men, Miles Garrett had played his royal master false; incapable of enthusiasm, cold, selfish, and phlegmatic, his calculations were untinged by passion, and need we add, unwarmed by patriotism. He understood the difficulties of the Jacobite cause, and weighing the chances with the nicest scrutiny, it seemed well to him to desert at once, and while yet he might make a merit of so doing, to the party in whose favour the odds seemed multiplying every day.

King William's camp occupied the rising grounds upon the northern side of the river. The hoarse murmur of the broad-breasted Boyne filled the stirless air between the two great armies, whose prowess was next day to determine the fate of the kingdom, and mingled sadly with that confluence of petty sounds, which, like the solemn murmurings of a mighty tide, over-arches the myriad gatherings of living men.

A sultry summer's night wrapt the wide landscape in darkness. The tents of William's splendidly appointed army spread like a canvass city over the undulating ground, and the dusky fires, at intervals, glared strong and red upon military forms, and munition waggons; while from across the river, far away, came the softened sounds of shouting, and the sullen roll of drums, with the rumble of provision cars, and the faint clear call of the trumpet, incessantly filling the air with the exciting evidences of the presence and preparation of the hostile army, It was now about the hour of twelve, when, as honest Story tells us, William of Nassau, his sword arm in a sling (for he had but that morning, while reconnoitering, received a wound which had well nigh proved his last), mounted upon his war steed, and accompanied by his staff, among whom we recognize, amid the dashing horsemen, our old friend Percy Neville, rode forth in person, through the camp. The guard, bearing torches, rode with them, and thus under the lurid illumination, glowing duskily on tossing plumes, and flashing upon burnished cuirasses, did the martial cavalcade tramp onward—its progress marked by the ruddy glare that crimsoned the air above them, and by the stern huzzas of excited welcome that greeted the soldier king, wherever he appeared.

There was an officer, a captain in one of King William's regiments of dragoons, with plumed hat and buff coat, standing by, as William of Nassau, accompanied by his staff, thus moved onward through the camp upon the memorable night to which our tale has brought us. This cavalry officer stood listlessly leaning against a provision waggon, and smoked on in contemptuous indifference, while a tattered, scared, and travelsoiled man, of mean aspect and small and unsightly figure, stood near him, with hat in hand, and earnestly urged his disregarded suit. In the lank, ungainly form, and sinister face of the officer, and in the crouching mien, and cadaverous, villainous aspect of his humble suitor, no person who had seen them once, could have failed to recognize Miles Garrett, and his now cast off dependant, Garvey.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GARVEY'S QUARTERS.

"As soon as they missed your honour," said Garvey, "they took me up to General Lauzun's tent—me that knew as much about it, God knows, and you know, as the babe unborn, and it was just the toss of a shilling I wasn't shot; they said I was your secretary, and must produce the correspondence, and as you very well know, sir, I had none to shew, not that I would have shown it, even if I had—God forbid—no such thing, of course."

"Of course," echoed Garrett, sneeringly.

"Of course," reiterated Garvey, in a tone of deprecatory humility;

"but in this case, you know, noble captain, it was out of my power. What had I to declare?—what *could* I tell?—I knew none of your secrets, and you'll bear me witness, Mr. Garrett, I never tried to learn them."

"Yes, you *did* try," said Garrett, who had removed his pipe for a moment, and now for the first time deigned a look, though no very auspicious one, upon his petitioner—"Yes, you did try, and you told all you could; but I found you out, and saw through you, when you thought I trusted you, you shallow miscreant; but no matter."

"I never wronged you, Mr. Garrett; by this cross, I never did you one hap'orth of harm, sir," urged Garvey, advancing nearer, and cowering still lower in his urgency—"never, sir—never, your honour, by every saint in heaven; may I never live till mornin', Mr. Garrett, if I did."

Garrett knew as well as Garvey did himself, that the wretched, short-sighted tool of Satan, that cowered, and cringed, and cursed before him, lied in every word he said; but he made no other answer, than with a faint and ugly smile, to puff a thin stream of tobacco into the air, and watch it as it curled up into the dark.

"Well," said he, after a second or two, "they did *not* shoot you; and what did they, pray?"

"They tossed me in a blanket, noble captain, for a full hour," whimpered the wretched man; "I'm bruises from head to heel, an' so sore, I scarce can stand, or walk, or lie."

Garrett took his pipe from his mouth, and laughed outright, and the miserable, servile creature before him essayed to join in the cachination.

"It was very funny—very funny," he said, "but they kept it up too long—if it was not for that I'd have laughed myself, indeed I would; but they kept it up cruelly long, and let me strike the ground every time; I'm aching from head to foot. It was at seven o'clock they turned me out of the camp, without a protection, so I dared not go towards Dublin, for you know all the passes are guarded, and I could not get through Drogheda to come here, for the king's—that is, King James's—soldiers have it, too, and there is not a creature in the country, and I had not a penny in my pocket, nor a morsel of food, and only for a drink of milk I got last night, I think I'd have died before morning—and a little girl ferried me over two miles below Drogheda; and I had such a round to come, keeping out of the way of the soldiers, for I was as much afraid of one side as the other, until I knew I was near, where I could see you, sir, God bless you; so I was hiding in bushes and ditches the whole day long—and running this way and that—and as God is my judge, this day, I eat nothing but a handful of cold potatoes I got out of a pig trough, early this morning; I'm half dead, Mr. Garrett—I'm starving, sir."

"I suppose you'd like to quarter here with me?" said Garrett, with a pleasant twinkle in his eye.

"If you don't let me, sir, I'm afraid I'll starve—I'll never live through the night without food," returned Garvey, imploringly; "since seven o'clock yesterday morning, I declare to God I never eat a bit, but half-a-dozen cold potatoes, not the size of wallnuts. Oh! Mr. Garrett, Mr. Garrett," and the wretched man stooped down, and crawled almost to his feet, in the desperate endeavour to catch the imperturbable captain's eye, now fixed upon the ground, "sure you won't refuse me, sir—you would not turn me off—you would not have me starve."

Garrett again took his pipe from his mouth, and spitting upon the ground, asked with a tranquil leer—

"And why should not I?"

"Because I served you, sir, in all your plans Mr. Garrett; oh, sir, you mustn't forget, you won't forget," replied the familiar, with agonized entreaty in every look, and tone, and gesture.

"Oh! Mr. Garrett, think of it—think of it all; remember Sir Hugh's business—remember Lady Willoughby; did not I help you every way—did I stop at any thing—and am not I ready for whatever you please again; sure if I was only your dog that served you through thick and thin, Mr. Garrett, you would not refuse me a morsel of food, when I'm famishing with hunger."

"And yet I have shot more than one dog in my time, for turning on his master; what do you say to that?" retorted Garrett, calmly.

"Why, Mr. Garrett, you don't mean—you can't mean—what is it—what is it at all?" cried the terrified villain.

"I'm not going to shoot you, you blockhead—but you had better let go my coat, or I'll hack your fingers off with my rapier; there, that's better," said Garrett, roughly; "you want, it seems, something to eat, and a place to lie in—that's reasonable enough, after all—you shall have them. Here Corporal Ford, turn out four of your men," he continued, addressing that officer; "and now Mr. Garvey, it is right to tell you," he resumed, after a considerable pause, and interrupting his address at every half-dozen words, to pursue his smoking, "its right you should understand that provisions are unusually dear—(here came a long whiff); and hungry mouths, on the contrary, unusually plenty—(here another puff); so that you see, his majesty's officers must all, in their several capacities, exercise the strictest economy—(another whiff); and as it happens that you will probably eat as much as another man—

(here came a long, thin stream of smoke, which seemed, as it were, attenuated and extended by the length and subtlety of the calculation): and as unfortunately there is no conceivable useful purpose to which we can turn you here—(another stream, if possible thinner and longer); why it seems to me advisable, for the better service of his majesty, to quarter you, for this night, upon the enemy—do you comprehend? So! here, Corporal Ford, take this little tory gentleman down to the river's bank, and—the water is not yet too high to ford it—put him into the stream, and make him cross. If he demurs, send a ball or two after him, and I'll be bound—wherever he goes—he'll not return."

In vain the affrighted wretch pleaded in an agony of terror—imploring, in the name of all the saints of heaven, and for the sake of God himself, to be turned out in any direction but the one which the inexorable captain had selected. He was hurried down to the river's brink, pouring forth prayers, imprecations, and entreaties at every step—shoved at last, actually weeping, into the stream—and then, under the muzzles of the soldiers' carbines, forced, willy nilly, to wade onward toward the hostile bank—often turning, often hesitating, now emerging nearly half way—and now nearly chin deep in the waters of the Boyne. At last, he hid himself, cowering, among the sedges at the opposite shore—while every moment the rising tide forced him to shift his position, and gradually rendered his retreat impossible—while at the same time his teeth began to chatter, and his limbs grew numb, as he squatted in the chill waters.

Feeling at last that his strength was failing him, the wretched, terror-stricken creature, through very fear of the imminent death which threatened him, should he longer endeavour to maintain his precarious and miserable position, summoned resolution, and plashing softly through the long grass and reeds, emerged at last upon the dry and solid sward. Creeping from bush to bush, and shivering so that his very joints ached, the exhausted wretch endeavoured by stamping his feet, chafing his limbs, and blowing upon his numbed fingers, to recover some of the vital warmth which seemed fast expiring within his chilled and travel-worn frame. Spite of all the caution, however, with which these comfortless proceedings were conducted, his movements were not long unobserved. An unlucky sentinel, after dodging about in vigilant suspicion, with his piece cocked, at last descried the object which had alarmed him.

"Hola, who goes there?" was the stern challenge which arrested unfortunate Garvey, in his dreary *pas de seul.*

He essayed to answer, but terror deprived him of utterance.

"Stand," cried the soldier, making his way leisurely up to him—"stand, friend, or I'll blow your head off—stand, I say."

As Garvey made no attempt to move, the hand of the musqueteer was soon clutched firmly in the little man's cravat; and shaking him perhaps a little more roughly than was strictly necessary, the soldier hauled him along with him; at every dozen steps propounding some new question, backed by an oath or two, and followed by a few additional chucks by the throat.

"Never an answer for me, is not there?" said he; "well, I'm bringing you to a place where they'll find a tongue for you, by ——, if you were as dumb as a red herrin'."

With this cheering assurance, Garvey was passively conducted by his captor, to a roofless hovel, which answered for a guard-room, where two or three soldiers were sleeping, stretched on the ground, and some were smoking and chatting together; and having been catechized there again, with no better success, he was placed under a further escort, and conducted, as a suspected spy, to the tent of the officer in command of the division, who, unhappily for the wretched Garvey, turned out to be the notorious Lord Galmoy.

Passing the sentinel who kept guard outside the tent ropes, the little party found themselves in the presence of that cold-blooded and cruel nobleman. He had but just dismounted, and his military hat and gloves had not yet been removed. He sate beside a rude table, on which a pair of candles were burning, some reports and writing materials, along with his pistols lay beside him; and a piece of tarpaulin stretched along a pole, fenced off a portion of the area for his lordship's bed-chamber. Beside him stood a stiff military attendant, who was receiving orders touching his lordship's personal equipment for the morrow; and his cuirass, together with his military saddle, and emblazoned saddle-cloth, lay upon a form close by.

As the party entered, his lordship looked up, and the light fell full upon his cadaverous face and hooked nose, and his bristling masses of light moustache; while his small, indolent eye coldly scanned them; and he said, in a drawling, careless tone, so slow and quiet, that but for its impassive coldness, it might have bespoken the very gentlest purposes:—

"A prisoner, so—what of him, corporal?"

"Crossed the river—so, so; and then crept up among the bushes—so!" resumed Lord Galmoy, as soon as he heard the statement through; "and, as you say, the very man, Miles Garrett's secretary, who was, yesterday morning, turned out of the camp, a suspected traitor, *then*; and *now*, your prisoner—so, so. Have you any information of importance to give us?" he continued, lazily turning his eyes upon Garvey; "If you have, say so, and it may possibly save you."

"Ah, my lord general—noble, generous sir," cried Garvey, whom the frenzy of actual despair had now at length restored to speech; "I'm no spy, as God is my witness—I'm no traitor; don't, for God's sake, don't have me blanketed again, noble general. I'm as honest as the king himself; ask any one that knows me. If they toss me again, it will be the death of me—I'm just dead as it is."

"I'm not thinking of any such thing, my good fellow," said his lordship, tranquilly.

"Lord bless you, sir, my Lord Galmoy, your noble honour, the Lord and all the saints of heaven reward and prosper you."

"Hold your tongue, fellow, if you can," said his lordship, in the same even tone, and staring upon him with the same unmoved but singularly repulsive countenance—"hold your tongue, and listen to me."

"That I will, my lord—noble general ——"

"See, my good gentleman," interrupted Lord Galmoy, in the same quiet way, "if you won't hold your tongue, I'll make you do so—how long is it since you left the prince's camp?"

"Well, I should say some twenty minutes or half an hour—perhaps more," said Garvey, whose thoughts, just then, were none of the clearest.

"Is the prince still living?" pursued his lordship.

"I do suppose he is," replied Garvey, more and more perplexed; "but I knew not that his life was in question."

"Come, come," said the officer, while for the first time an imperious and measured emphasis slightly marked his calm address, and something indescribably intimidating overcast his features, though their tranquillity remained undisturbed, "your simplicity is a little overacted—you really must manage to know something; take my advice, and endeavour to remember; I ask you simply, what opinion is pronounced on the prince's wound—is it mortal, dangerous, or trifling? It's a plain question—*do* manage to answer it."

"As I'm a living man, my lord general, I did not so much as hear he was wounded, before now," replied Garvey.

"Hum—ha!—I see—very well, Mr. what's-your-name—I understand—you're a very clever person—very profound—or else really very stupid—stupid or contumacious."

"Mullins," said his lordship, suddenly addressing the military servant, who was standing by, "as I live, I had well nigh forgot to tell you to punch another hole in the left shoulder-strap of the inlaid cuirass; see, bring it hither." And his lordship went minutely into details; and having concluded, he turned once more toward the party who awaited his further orders; "so, he offers nothing," continued his lordship, in the same calm tone; "very well, you know what to do with him; and, sergeant, observe me, before you hang him, it will not be amiss to try him with the strappado—you may get something from him yet."

"Great God—oh, Christ!" cried the frantic prisoner; "noble, good, kind, worthy general, it is not—it is not—oh, holy Mother of God; why, blessed saints of heaven, it can't be possible."

During this burst of agony, Lord Galmoy nodded impassively to the guard, who had hurried the wretched man from the tent, long before he had concluded this incoherent appeal, the last he was ever to utter to the mercy of a human tribunal.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE STRAPPADO.

The reader must accompany us to a gentle bush-clad slope, immediately outside the Irish camp. Here stood the simple apparatus, by means of which was inflicted the terrible torture, known by the name of the strappado—an importation for which the Irish were indebted to the French troops who served among them. The machine was, as we have said, a simple one—consisting of a single beam of some twenty feet in height, planted perpendicularly in the ground, with a strong horizontal arm, little more than a yard in length, extended, gibbet-like, from the top of it; and in a pulley, attached to the extremity of this ran a rope, one end of which swung loosely to the ground, while the other was firmly knotted on a projecting plug fixed in the upright post which we have described, and also within little more than a foot of the ground. Beneath this mysterious instrument stood the military lictors, to whom is committed the execution of the sentence we have but just heard, and some dozen or so of spectators—all in high, good humour; and in the centre, the miserable prisoner himself, now stripped to his shirt and breeches—and with his lank arms tied at the wrists firmly behind his back.

"For God's sake, have mercy, sir—worthy, honest gentleman."

"To be sure I will, alanna; I would not hurt a hair of your head for

Ireland's grounds; we'll only just go through the forums, that's all," said the burly soldier, who was now knotting the loose extremity of the long rope we have mentioned, with many a doubled wrench, securely in the wretched man's wrists, bound fast as they were behind his back.

"Mercy, mercy—for God's sake, mercy, noble sir," repeated their helpless victim, in the mere stupefaction of vacant terror.

"To be sure I will, aint I tellin' you?" pursued the executioner, in a tone of the most soothing endearment, and at the same time making a hideous grimace, followed by a grin, and a wink at the bystanders; "I'd sooner hurt myself than such a purty gossoon, any day; we'll make it as pleasant as we can—and I hope you don't find *that* too tight," he added, as he wrenched the last knot close with his whole force.

"Mercy, sir—mercy—mercy," the wretched man continued to sob, as though he had lost the power of uttering any word but the one.

"Nonsense, man, it's nothin' at all, I'm tellin' you; we'll only give you a bit iv a lift, just to show you London—nothin' more; I tell you it's nothin' at all worth spakin' about. What the devil are you afeard of, *a bouchal?*" reiterated the soldier, in the same pleasant vein.

"Now, he's all right, boys," he resumed, trying the firmness of the knot with a few careless chucks; "he's quite safe, and no fear of slipping; for I would not have you get a fall for all I'm worth—do ye mind; pull away, boys—lift him—up with him—there he goes."

As he thus spoke, two of the other soldiers hauling the opposite extremity of the rope, raised the manacled wretch slowly from the ground, until he swung by his wrists, at a height of about six feet, his face depending toward the earth, and his knees nearly touching his chin—while the utmost exertion of every fibre was required to keep his arms close enough to his back, to prevent the strain upon them from becoming actually intolerable.

Having raised him to this height, the fixed extremity of the rope was so secured as to prevent the possibility of his descending nearer to the earth.

"Ah, gentlemen—for God's sake," persisted the terrified Garvey, "for God's sake, gentlemen, let me down now—do, good gentlemen—I can't bear it longer, my arms are breaking—mercy, mercy, good gentlemen, mercy."

"Who's hurtin' you, avich," resumed the same facetious personage, "tell me, my darlin', an' I'll taich him behaviour; can't yez let the gintleman alone, an' he not offendin' any one," continued he, with genuine humour, addressing his grinning comrades, "an' only wants to get up a bit, and see what's goin' an."

"Thrue for you, Bryan," responded the sergeant, who stood by, with grave jocularity, "he came here just to see whatever he could, just as I may say, to look round him *that* a way," and, as he concluded, the sergeant, with easy familiarity, span him gently round by the lock of hair which depended from his forehead, to the intense amusement of the spectators.

"Mercy, gentlemen, mercy—I can't bear it—my arms—oh, my God—my arms—mercy, mercy," cried Garvey, with increasing agony; while the twitching of every flushed feature betrayed the intensity of the exertion which tasked his exhausted strength; "oh, mercy, gentlemen—mercy—mercy."

"Up with him now, pull away, pull away, boys, don't be keepin' his honour waiting," pursued the sergeant. "There he goes, pull away, pull away—up with him—there he goes."

As he spoke two of the soldiers under his command, hauled the rope with their united strength, until they had raised the miserable man to within about a yard of the pulley, at the end of the projecting arm. The rope by which he swung was, as the reader will remember, secured firmly at the extremity, in a plug projecting from the upright shaft of the gibbet-like apparatus, and in such a way that the living load which depended at the other end could not fall nearer than some six feet or so, to the earth.

"Mercy, mercy. Oh, my God, let me rest for half a minute," cried Garvey. "Mercy, gentlemen, mercy, mercy."

"Never fear, we'll let you down soon enough, don't be unaisy," said the sergeant, measuring, as nearly as he could with his halbert, the height at which the prisoner was now suspended. "That will do; now mind the word, when I say *three*, steady boys—one—mind the word—two, steady boys—three, and away he goes."

At the word, the men let the rope go, and the living burthen which they had so lately raised, shot downwards from his elevated position to the point at which, as we have said, the rope was fixed; there his descent was arrested with a dislocating shock which wrenched his arms almost from the shoulder sockets. With a yell so appalling that it dashed with a momentary horror, even the faces of the executioners themselves, the miserable man testified the unendurable anguish of the dreadful torture; rolling his head and his eyes around, in the delirium of his fierce agony, he shrieked forth blasphemies and prayers in wild and terrible incoherence.

"Pike him, an' put him out of pain, for God's sake, will yez?" cried one of the spectators, with the energy of horror, and wincing under the frightful spectacle.

"Lave him alone," said the sergeant, authoritatively; "stand back, a bouchal, and mind your own business, or I'll taich you a lesson; stand back, I say."

"Have you any thing to say now, mister prisoner?" he demanded, sternly, of the mangled wretch, who slowly revolved—a spectacle half ludicrous, half terrific; maddened and stunned with agony, however, he only jabbered, and yelled, and writhed.

"Oh, blessed Father, stop his mouth, any way," cried another of the lookers-on, in irrepressible terror and loathing.

"I'm sorry I kem near it at all, God bless us," said a third, lingering on in the irresistible fascination of horror.

"Will ye spake, darlin'!—yes or no," demanded the sergeant again, "an' stop your bawling?"

"Do you hear the sargeant spaking to you?" demanded one of the executioners, indignantly; and at the same time administering a slight chuck to the rope, which, however, had no other effect than that of extorting a still more piercing yell from the miserable caitiff.

"Come, boys, he's a rale detarmined Turk of a chap," said the sergeant, irefully; "he won't be said by you or me—so are yez ready?"

"Come along," responded one.

"Now for it," replied the other.

And once more, with their united strength, Garvey soared aloft, to the topmost range of the rope's play—some score feet high in the air. Again was the concerted signal given—"one, two, three!"—and again, with a whirr, and a rush, and a shock that almost snapped the rope, down came the racked prisoner, and the hideous torture was repeated; and now the agony of the wretch—his shrieks and writhings seemed to kindle a ferocious excitement among his executioners. The two soldiers who strained the rope, tugged faster and more furiously, and the very exertion demanded by the feat, seemed but to stimulate their growing fury. The sergeant stormed and swore his encouragement and applause; and even some of the spectators caught the irresistible contagion, and stamped and whooped in irrepressible excitement.

Again was the agonized wretch raised aloft, as before, and again subjected to the same terrific shock; and, again, and yet again, was the torture repeated, amid shrieks, that rang still wilder and more piercing every moment; while at each new descent the frightful process of dislocation perceptibly advanced; at last, after nine such unutterable pangs, nature relieved the sufferer, and he received the tenth and last in the passive silence of insensibility. Cruelty had now done its worst; the tortured limbs were wrenched completely round in their sockets, and, from the torn ligaments, the bruised blood was welling through his tattered shirt, in purple streams. He was now lowered to the ground and before the halter, whose gripe was to end the sentence with the life of the senseless and mutilated mass of humanity which lay before them, had been adjusted about his throat, one of the soldiers clubbed his musket, and with two blows mercifully shattered the unconscious head to pieces, and thus secured the mangled wretch against the possibility of further torment.

Thus, with all his unscrupulous pliancy and wakeful cunning, did our old acquaintance, Garvey, come eventually to swing upon a gibbet; and, by a strange coincidence enough, he attained that elevation upon a charge of one of the very few crimes of which he was in reality innocent. Then leave we Garvey there, with strained neck and head awry, slowly swaying in the soft night breeze, never more to scheme or flatter, with heart now steeled for ever against the allurements of human ambition, and the terrors of human power, more serenely tranquil than the bravest of them all, amid the thunder, and shouting, and slaughter of the morrow's battle.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FORTUNE OF THE FIELD—THE LAST RETURN TO DUBLIN—TIDINGS OF TORLOGH O'BRIEN.

THE author of "The Boyne Water" has, with a masterly hand, sketched the events of the momentous battle which gives its name to his work; we are not presumptuous enough to traverse the ground already explored by him; we shall have, besides, ere we close these chapters, to witness another and a far more desperately contested fight than this.

Return we, therefore, now to the friends whom we have left in the good city of Dublin. Early on the morning following the events recorded in our last chapter, it was universally known among the citizens that expresses had arrived, announcing that the battle would be fought that day. The guards at all the city gates were doubled, and the Protestant inhabitants prudently kept within their homes. As is usual in cases of such excited and terrible suspense, every hour brought with it some new rumour—some fresh alarm. Now it was announced that the French fleet was riding in Dublin bay; and again that an express had arrived from Waterford, and that the French troops had effected a landing in England. Then again came a report that the battle was going in favour of King James, and the English right wing already entirely routed. Then it was rumoured that King William was killed, and next, that he was only made prisoner. Varied by such agitating and conflicting rumours, the tedious hours of the long summer's day wore on. But at length, at about five o'clock in the evening, on jaded horses, dejected and travel-soiled, the first straggling couriers from the field of battle came riding into the town. These men, interrupted at every corner, clustered round by little mobs of listeners at every tavern door where they halted, and pursued by the more pertinacious even into the sanctuary of the tap-room, speedily spread the inauspicious tidings through the town. Others, scared and weary, came clattering in, at six o'clock, with news still more disastrous, of utter defeat. And hence, as the night wore on, faster and faster every moment came crowding in wounded and dusty soldiers, on tired steeds, and among them many of King James's body guards, without either swords or pistols, exhausted, savage, and dejected. The appearance of these latter gave rise to abundant speculation respecting the fate of the King himself, while the confusion and disorder of the streets were every moment enhanced by the continual and desultory arrival of ammunition carts, waggons, cannon and military baggage, passing incessantly through all the avenues of the town. Such was the disordered condition of the city at about ten o'clock at night, when King James himself came in, accompanied by about two hundred horse, straggling, broken, and dispirited. As this soiled and sombre effigy of royalty rode onward toward the Castle, stared at in silent dismay and wonder by the gaping crowd, and all but jostled by the dust-covered troopers who rode in such disorder about him, how striking—almost touching was the contrast which memory suggested, when, in all the splendid order of a stately pageant, amid the blessings and acclamations of enthusiastic thousands, he had, but one short year before, made his entrance into the self-same city of Dublin. Thus dejected, and virtually dethroned, the poor King rode into the royal fortress, which was, after that night, never more to own him as its master.

Until twelve o'clock that night, these broken groups of horse came straggling, in continual succession, into the town; and the Protestants began to think that in good truth the whole Jacobite army had been utterly disorganized and broken, and were almost expecting the arrival of William's forces, to complete their destruction, when, with the wild harmony of hautboys and trumpets, and the roll of kettledrums, the van of the Irish horse appeared, and, much to the surprise of all who had witnessed the previous scattered arrivals, the whole of this splendid force entered the town, in perfect order. These were succeeded, early in the morning, by the French, and a great portion of the Irish foot; and after an interval of a few hours, the whole of this force marched out again, to receive and check the advance of William's army, and secure the city from attack.

All this, it is needless to say, kept the inhabitants of the town in a constant flutter of excitement and alarm. But who can describe the agony of suspense in which poor Grace awaited some tidings of her lover. Trusting in the confusion and darkness of the hour to escape remark, the old knight himself resolved, if possible, to procure some accurate information, which might relieve his child and himself from an uncertainty which was becoming all but insupportable. Without communicating his design to her, he was speedily in the midst of the scene of uproar and confusion which he had for so long witnessed from the window of his lodging. He had not to go far for the information which he coveted; for at the door of the Carbrie he saw an officer dismount, wearing the uniform of Torlogh O'Brien's regiment. Pushing his way through a crowd of gloomy faces, and heedless of the loud and eager conversation that arose on every side of him, Sir Hugh Willoughby followed the object of his pursuit through the mob of frightened and inquisitive civilians and dusty soldiers, who filled the public room of the old inn; and with the courtesy which the usages of the time allowed, took his seat at the table where the officer had already established himself; and after a brief introductory greeting, invited him to drink a pint of sack, at his expense. Spite of the sullenness of fatigue and defeat, some considerations—among which, perchance, a lamentable scarcity of coin was not the least—induced a prompt, if not very gracious acquiescence on the part of the stranger.

"It has fared amiss with you, to-day," said Sir Hugh, after a few preliminary remarks, "unless report speak false."

The soldier replied with a glance, half sullen, half defiant; then throwing his hat, with a reckless air, upon the table, he said, with a careless bitterness—

"It has fared with us, precisely as it ever must, sir, with men commanded by one who has neither conduct nor courage. We have had to retreat before superior numbers, but our retreat was as orderly and as steady as a movement on parade. Had my Lord Tyrconnell, and our colonel, and Sarsfield been duly seconded, by —— we would have won the country this day; as it was, *they* have left more men upon the field than we: I pistoled two with my own hand, myself. The battle was as well fought as ever was field—I care not where. That French fellow, Lauzun, is enough to ruin fifty campaigns himself—the king, too, marred and mismanaged everything; almost all our artillery was last night sent off the ground, for Dublin, here—as if expressly to dishearten our men; and then, when the fight began, the old ——; but no matter, he'll pay dearly for it all, himself—it was a cursed day for Ireland when he first set his foot on her shores."

Having thus delivered himself, he quaffed off his wine, and filled another glass.

"And your colonel," said Sir Hugh, his heart sinking with anxiety as he approached the question, which he almost dreaded to put—"your colonel—Torlogh O'Brien—a friend, I may say a very near and dear friend of mine; how has it fared with him?"

"As with a brave soldier," answered the officer, sternly, but sadly withal, as he glanced through the window by the table-side, upward at the silvery summer clouds; "he lies on the field where he fought so well; and no braver soldier sleeps in the light of that moon to-night."

"Good God, sir, dead!" ejaculated Sir Hugh, in extreme agitation; "is he—is he really and certainly dead?"

"'Ifaith, sir—I fear me it is but too sure. I saw it, myself, in the last gallant charge—a d——d Dutch fellow did it—shot him in the sword-arm; and he was sabred down the next moment, and tumbled among the horses. If there is any life left in him still, he must have had as many as a cat. The Dutch rascal was one of the birds I bagged—that's one comfort. Before the smoke was out of his pistol, I shot him as dead as that board;" and he slapped his hand on the table.

"Yet it is possible—ay, clearly possible, after all, that he may still be living," cried Sir Hugh, while a faint hope gleamed on his mind, though he scarcely dared himself to trust it; "there was my own uncle, in Cromwell's time—and—ay, ay, it well may be—many a man has outlived a worse mauling than that. Sir, sir, we must not despond—we will not despair—we'll drink to his health, sir, and his speedy recovery; fill, sir, fill—I pledge you to the health of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien."

The soldier filled carelessly, as one who goes through some lifeless form, and gloomily dashed the liquor off; and Sir Hugh himself, resolved to tell the best tale he could to his poor child—hastily took leave of his new acquaintance, having placed upon the board a gold piece to defray the expense of their entertainment—a politeness which, even at a later period, one gentleman might tender to another, without offending the rules of etiquette.

Thus did old Sir Hugh, with a forced confidence and cheerfulness in his look and accents, but with a heart laden with the direst misgivings, return to his lodgings, and to his daughter's presence.

* * * * * * *

It was at five o'clock in the morning, after the memorable battle of the Boyne, that the Roman Catholic Lord mayor, two or three of the judges, and some few of the principal citizens, who had espoused the cause of King James, stood in a motley group, awaiting the appearance of their royal master, in the presence-chamber. The king's summons had called them from uneasy slumbers thus early to the castle; and in the cold grey of the morning's light, it were hard to imagine a drearier or less inviting spectacle, than this group of loyalists presented. While they were waiting thus, James, a man of punctuality to the last, was employed in paying and discharging his menial servants, previously to taking his final leave of the Irish capital. At last, however, the dispirited expectants in the presence-chamber were relieved—the door opened, and James, followed by two or three gentlemen and officers, including Colonel Lutterel, who kept garrison as governor of the city, entered the apartment.

The king was plainly dressed in a travelling suit, and a certain expression of bitterness overcast, with additional gloom, his usually sombre countenance—as with grave moroseness he returned the salute of the group who awaited him. There was that, in the fallen condition of the king—in the very magnitude of his misfortunes, which lent a kind of mournful dignity to his presence, and which, spite of the petulance that occasionally broke from him, impressed the few disappointed and well nigh ruined followers of his cause, who stood before him, with feelings of melancholy respect.

"Gentlemen," said the king, after a brief pause, "it hath pleased the almighty Disposer of events to give the victory to our enemies; you have, doubtless, heard already, all that it concerns you most nearly to know. Our army hath been defeated, and the enemy will be in possession of this city, at latest, before many days have passed. It hath been our fate—we speak it in no bitterness, for your case is one with ours—to be everywhere ill-served. In England, we had an army who could have fought for us, if they would—here it is contrariwise: we have an army who are loyal enough, but who will not stand by us; the issue is, in either case, for us, one and the same. Matters, therefore, being so, we must needs shift for ourselves as best we may; above all, we do command you—we do *implore* of you, gentlemen, in your several stations—and principally you, Colonel Lutterel, as governor of this our city—to prevent all undue severities, all angry reprisals, all violences, which some may be disposed—while the city remains still in the hands of our friends—to inflict upon the suspected within its walls. We do earnestly entreat of you all to remember that this is *our* city, and they our subjects; protect it and them so long as it shall seem wise to occupy this town for us. This is our last command—our parting request."

Here the king paused for a second or two, while he glanced round again upon his dejected auditory, and a general murmur of acquiescence indicated the respectful attention with which he was listened to.

"Our personal safety," pursued James, in a changed voice, "renders it needful that we stay no longer within our kingdom of Ireland—*your* services and fidelity, gentlemen, we shall ever bear in affectionate remembrance. Make for yourselves such terms as prudence dictates: as for us, the sad fortune which hath turned even our own children——"

The king's voice faltered and broke; and spite of all his efforts, two or three heavy tears rolled slowly, one by one, down his face, and fell sullenly upon his rich lace collar. Mastering the weakness of his wounded heart, with a strong effort, James, after a few moments, resumed.

"The sad fortune which hath pursued us through all our troubles—dissolving those natural ties dearest to the human heart—and ranking among our enemies even those most cherished and beloved, hath left us but little to hope from the humanity of strangers. What clemency may we expect from them, seeing that our own kindred—our own children, have drawn the sword against us? We shall, therefore, quit this kingdom, trusting to the loyalty of those we leave behind, to guard our interests as to them seems best: we take our departure—it may be to meet soon under happier fortunes again; it may be to meet no more—but, at all events, bearing with us a sweet and consolatory remembrance of your most loyal faith and constancy: and so, gentlemen, we bid you farewell—all lovingly farewell—farewell."

There was, in the conclusion of the king's brief address, something pathetic, and even generous, which touched the hearts of his auditory with a momentary feeling akin to pity and even admiration. Such as were foremost in the little crowd, grouped around him as he departed, with loyal wishes and blessings—and several even kneeled and kissed the feeble hand from which the sceptre had been so lately wrung.

A minute or two more, and King James, accompanied by but two or three attendants, rode at a sharp trot over the castle drawbridge, and thence along the high road to Waterford, where he embarked for France, never more to revisit his hereditary dominions.

* * * * *

The day that followed was an anxious one for the Protestants who remained in the city of Dublin; the blackest rage and exasperation pervaded the defeated soldiery, who indemnified themselves for their disappointment (disgrace it could not fairly be called) by terrifying the disaffected and Whiggish residents, still in their power, with continual threats of fire and sack. The militia, who kept guard at the Castle, talked freely and exultingly of the pillage and burning which was to lay the city waste, ere William with his forces could effect an entrance. Thus were the suspected inhabitants kept perpetually upon the rack of frightful anticipation and suspense during the whole of the anxious interval between the departure of James, and the entrance of the victorious William.

Peeping stealthily from their windows, these obnoxious inmates beheld, with anxious and fearful curiosity, the tumultuous confusion which filled the streets ; mobs of listless and depressed idlers of all ranks, dusty stragglers from every corps, and in all the varied uniforms of King James's army ; carts and waggons laden with stores and ammunition, mounted lackeys, and the stately carriages of the Jacobite aristocracy, lumbering westward from the town, with their affrighted loads of beauty and refinement ; dust and clatter, jostling and gossipping, gloomy citizens, furious and half drunken soldiers, liveried servants, carters, coaches, and horsemen, mingled, and doubled, and crushed and hustled in the mazes of a distempered and distracting dream.

All this hurry-scurry had, however, pretty well subsided by two or three o'clock, and the affrighted Protestants began now, in good earnest, to hope that their terrors had been, after all, but causeless. The arrival of King William's vanguard was momentarily expected ; and the poor Roman Catholic citizens, in this untoward reverse of fortune, began, in turn, to think of securing themselves from the wrath of the invaders, whose whole power was now thought to be approaching within a few hours' march of the town ; and many of them sought shelter, and found it too, by scores, in the shops and houses of the Protestants. Again, however, the tables were destined to be turned, for, at four o'clock, the entire Jacobite army, which was supposed to have been, by this time, far on its march westward, re-entered the town—the cavalry foremost, and these followed by the French and Irish foot, with bands playing, and banners displayed, and thundering huzzas. And now, indeed, the panic of the defenceless Protestants was piteous; women screamed—children cried—men barred their doors and windows, and stood in distracted silence, awaiting the overwhelming assault and destruction which all expected—unarmed, unaided, and as they believed, devoted to immediate and frightful ruin and death. Once more, however, their fears were relieved, for the whole army marched through the town without once halting, until they had reached the open country at the other side, where they were formed for the march, and so proceeded westward, astounding many a gaping villager and rustic maiden with the splendour of their long drawn pageant of martial pomp and ringing music.

Still, Lutterell, with some three hundred of the militia, continued to keep garrison for King James, in the city of Dublin, and still the gaols and the provisional prisons, converted to that use for the occasion, remained full—in some cases nearly to suffocation—of the suspected Whigs and Protestants who had been summarily consigned to the rigours of confinement; and still the sentinels kept guard at the doors—sometimes threatening them with immediate execution—sometimes promising to blow them up with gunpowder, said to be stored in the vaults underneath; and, in short, keeping alive their sensibilities by a constant round of such practical pleasantries.

Lutterell, however, a few hours afterwards, followed the army, and withdrew his guards; the prisoners were now at liberty—the militia all gone, and thus the last vestige of James's supremacy had vanished from the city of Dublin as completely as though the sights and terrors of the last strange year had been but the creations of a dream.

It was not, however, until eight o'clock on the following night that the fearful interregnum which held the city in all the anxiety and agitation of suspense, was finally terminated by the entrance of a single troop of William's dragoons, who came, with their officer, to take charge of the stores. A contemporary writer, an eye-witness of the scene, describes their reception: "It was impossible," says the author of the Irish Journal, "the king himself coming after this, could be welcomed with equal joy as this one troop; the Protestants hung about the horses, and were ready to pull the men off them, as they marched up to the Castle."

Having thus seen the old King fairly out of the island, and the new one established in possession of the Irish capital, leaving William's army encamped close to Dublin, by the quiet village of Finglas, and that of his ill-fated rival in active preparation for the defence of Limerick, we shall close this Chapter, designing, in our next, to take up the personal adventures of those whose fortunes we have hitherto followed, under circumstances thus suddenly, and to some of them disastrously, reversed

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CATHEDRAL.

THE moon was now high in the heavens, and her blue light fell through the tall arches of a roofless aisle. The hum and buzz of the stirring streets but faintly floated into this solemn and secluded ruin; the bat flitted in his noiseless zig-zag career; the drooping ivy nodded and beckoned from the time-worn buttresses, and thin white mists crept over the grass-grown graves. Through the grey shafts of the Gothic aisle, a little group moves slowly and mysteriously; two men in slouching hats—are carrying in a cloak some heavy, helpless burthen, and stagger and stumble through the undulating graves as they proceed. See, yonder are two others; their coats are thrown aside, and a heavy slab of stone displaced has disclosed a dark, yawning orifice in the wall. See, yet again, another pair of silent figures; side by side they stand beneath the high-arched doorway, under the central tower, guarding, as it seems, the entrance into this melancholy and solemn place. Never did moonlight fall upon two more haggard and resolute faces; swords peep out from the skirts of their short mantles, and pistols gleam in their hands. The faces are fixed as death and all as silent—not even whispers passing. A stranger, looking in through that stone-shafted aisle, might have fancied he beheld the spectres of the guilty dead, re-enacting some of the dark and fearful scenes of the life they had left, in that ghostly and desolate spot.

* * * * * * * * *

About the same time—scarce a stone's throw away—an earnest colloquy engaged two men in close debate, whose gist and purpose nearly enough affected those silent figures, whom we have just seen in the ruins. There then stood, at this the northern side of the city, among the scattered dwellings of a broad, winding street, a lowly stunted inn, with a thatched roof, and projecting upper story, half barn, half house. Within was a broad, earthen-floored chamber, where dozens of guests, of one kind or another, were talking, singing, eating, and drinking, with small regard either to the criticisms or the convenience of any but their own especial knot of companions. In the rear of this were several deserted stables, the lofts of which had been converted into a sort of common sleeping ward, for the poorer frequenters of this little inn. A few bundles of musty straw supplied the bedding, and a wallet, or saddle, furnished the luxuriously-disposed with bolster and pillow at once. Strewn over the floor of this dreary dormitory, lay some half-dozen tired mortals; some snoring in profound unconsciousness, others kept awake by many an anxious thought for the coming morrow. Among those who slept, was a stout and gloomy-looking old man, rolled in his threadbare cloak, his head supported upon a scanty bundle, tied in a handkerchief, and his deep, stertorous breathing testifying how soundly he slumbered. On a sudden he started up with a look of terror, and gazing into the darkness of the chamber, with a moaning shudder—

"Oh, God! oh, God! what dreams!" he muttered at last; and rising slowly and dejectedly, for he feared to disturb his companions in wretchedness, who were likely to resent such an invasion of their repose with a violence proportionate to the value they set upon this, their solitary luxury, he crept towards the ladder, which led downwards from the loft. Close to this point, however, unfortunately for his peaceable intentions, a recent comer, unseen by our newly-awakened friend, had established himself; and upon this recumbent figure the portly walker set his foot, with a pressure which was any thing but soothing. Up bounced the sleeper from his lair, with a ready oath, and a fist already clenched, to second the imprecation with a blow. A chance ray of moonlight, however, streaming through the broken roof, illuminated the forbidding face of the burly offender, and the assailant stayed his hand; and, after a breathless pause of a few seconds, ejaculated—

"Tisdal!"

"Ay, Tisdal," retorted he—"Tisdal, I, and thou, Deveril, or the devil has borrowed his voice."

"Well met, Jeremiah—well met, bow-shanks," said the ruffian, but without his usual hilarity of tone. "Curse this place; hadn't we better come down and have something—eh?

"Yes, if *you* pay for it," said Tisdal, with bitter vehemence; "I have but three shillings in the world, but three—and I'm not going to squander them on *you*, miscreant!"

"Very good—as you please, honest master Tisdal," replied Deveril, coolly; "as for me I have a pocketful of crowns, but, egad, they're brass ones; and now that the king is gone, the prince has played your humble servant a scurvy trick and cried them all down to pennies; but never mind, come down, I say—I want to have a word with you; I have some work on my fingers, and want a partner; what say you to a share in a venture?—come down, I say, come along."

And Deveril, without adding another word, descended the crazy ladder, every second rung of which was either gone or cracked. Tisdal, whose necessities overcame his abhorrence of the man, followed, and they both stood upon the rutted and broken pavement of the little court-yard—each glanced around with the quickness of suspicion, but the place was absolutely deserted and silent, except from the muffled sounds of song and laughter that arose from the kitchen of the humble inn—the two companions stood close together, and spoke in the lowest tones of caution.

"I've had bad dreams," quoth Tisdal, whose destitution made him a ready listener to any proposal for bettering his forlorn condition, "and your venture will come to nought; besides if it be any thing of the old kind," he whispered hurriedly, "I'll have nothing to do with it—I'll have no part in it—I'd rather die—I'd rather die!"

"Tut, man, spare your breath," said Deveril, coolly, "why there's not a man in the city worth sixpence after all the taxation, and searches, and all that; whom in the devil's name could we rob with profit; content yourself, it's nothing of the kind."

"Deveril—Deveril," said Tisdal, with a troubled and sinister air, "my dream is coming out—it is coming out. I do believe you are the fiend himself, in shape of man, come again to tempt and undo me."

"Pshaw, man!—what ails you?" retorted Deveril, impatiently. "I tell you it's no such thing—quite the reverse—a laudable, legal, righteous, saint-like action."

"What is it?—out with it, then," urged Tisdal.

"There are two outlawed rascals," responded Deveril, "Ryan (Ned of the Hills, they call him) and Hogan, nicknamed Galloping Hogan. The prince has set a price upon their heads. I have smoked a pipe with them in the camp, and know them; and I think I recognized them both, not two hours since, in this town. If they are hiding here, we may, with your knowledge of the cut-throat lanes and alleys of the city, and my acquaintance with their persons, point them both out, and so touch the gold. There's a simple, honest, straightforward plan for you, that has none of the old stand-and-deliver smack about it, that you should roll your eyes, and turn up your nose at mention of it. Eh?—what say you?"

Tisdal, after some brief parley, agreed.

"Here I am in King Jemmie's uniform, and about to touch King William's cash," said Deveril, with a rollicking grin, and a snap of the fingers. "Little Dick Slash for ever! Ah! Captain, no one like Dick for getting out of a scrape—that you'll allow. I'm a deserter, do you mind, at present; and then, if this scheme fails, why I'm off again, away for Limerick, after the drum and the colours once more; for I've a kick or two left in me still; and, egad, I'll see the fun out, unless better offers."

* * * * * * *

King William had encamped his army, not far from forty thousand strong, close by the little village of Finglass. The city of Dublin, though filled with laggers and deserters from James's army, skulking in all its obscure hiding-places, was yet secure enough. The Blue Guards garrisoned the Castle, and kept guard at all the public offices. The Protestant citizens forgot all their losses and troubles, and, to their credit be it added, even their old scores of vengeance, in the happy consciousness of their entire deliverance.

On the Sunday following the memorable passage of the Boyne, King William, a punctilious observer of the public duties as well as of the domestic proprieties of religion, attended Divine service in St. Patrick's Cathedral. The gate of the great aisle stood open to receive the royal conqueror; curiosity, enthusiasm, and loyalty, had combined with higher motives, to draw together an immense concourse, within this solemn and ancient building. Among the crowd who tended thither, walked Sir Hugh, accompanied by his old friend and kinsman, Sir Thomas Neville, who had regaled him already with a hundred vehement complaints, of his "hair-brained son," his "mad-cap boy," his "good-for-nothing, scape-grace, Percy;" of whose eventual fortunes, it seemed, he so absolutely despaired, that he was well nigh resolved to transport him to Jamaica, or anywhere, out of his sight or hearing.

"I tell you what," said he, confidentially, at last: "I have reason to believe the boy was about to make a fool of himself for life—for life, sir. Egad! I ascertained by a lucky accident the damsel's name—it was Tisdal."

"How!—Tisdal!" ejaculated Sir Hugh. "Can it be little Phebe—Phebe Tisdal? You amaze me!"

"By my troth, 'twas even so—Phebe Tisdal, at your service," responded his companion: "but I have knocked that scheme on the head. I did not let him know I was in the secret, however, for the boy has a spice of his father in him—egad, sir, a spirit, a devil of a spirit, sir—so I made interest, and had the hopeful jackanapes sent off upon public business—a good joke i' faith!—public business, sir, to London. Ha, ha!"

"So we sha'nt see poor Percy," said Sir Hugh.

"No, no—egad!—not this bout," said Sir Thomas, wiping his eyes after his explosion of merriment: "not this bout, sir; he's safer where he is; for it would not quite do to have my son marry a milkmaid. I wrote a short letter— pretty complete extinguisher upon the whole affair--to the girl, and I mean to be after him myself to London. He can't be too closely looked after—no, no."

When these old kinsfolk had reached the Gothic pile, and found themselves at last among its rude and solemn arches—a part of the expectant multitude who thronged its aisle, whose echoes were now pealing with the rich and plaintive harmonies of the organ—they took their places in silence in the front of the crowd, who had already formed themselves so as to leave a clear passage along the centre to the choir, down which the king was to walk. Sir Hugh, who had never yet beheld the renowned personage, who had played so great a part in the world's history, was naturally intensely anxious to behold him; and at last this eager wish was gratified.

A prolonged shouting from without, amid which the tramp of chargers could scarcely be heard, announced the arrival of the king, accompanied by several of his chief officers and a guard; and in a few minutes, having dismounted, the royal party entered at the western gate, and so proceeded up the centre of the great aisle. The slow pace at which they moved, afforded abundant time to Sir Hugh to scan the figure of him whose fame had for so long filled all Europe, and the sounds and sights of whose last victory were still, as it were, before and around them. A kind of hum—a low, stirring sound—which reverence for the place alone restrained from swelling into a wild huzza of rapture—rose on every side, from the dense and enthusiastic crowd, as William advanced, with slow and somewhat feeble step, along the aisle—a frail, slight figure, arrayed in a riding suit of crimson velvet, heavily laced, with the ponderous adjuncts of the high jack-boots and clumsy spurs, worn in those days; his apparent feebleness contrasting with exciting effect, with all that was known of the daring and resolution which animated that fragile frame in the field of battle. He wore, of course, the full peruke of the day, in hue, dark brown, overshadowing a countenance (alas! that it should be so!) very perceptibly scarred with the small-pox; the face was lank, its general character austere and immoveable, with an expression about the mouth that resembled the peevishness of habitual pain; the nose was very high, the eye-brows marked, and the eyes dark, prominent, and bright as an eagle's. The piercing fire of this latter feature redeemed the whole face, and contrasted vividly and splendidly with its rigid stillness; no one on whom it looked ever forgot its power—it was an eye worthy of the hero. He carried a cane in his hand, and leaned upon it with a pressure, which showed that his apparent weakness was also real; and as he moved onward, that deep, hollow cough, which never forsook him, was more than once audible.

Not far from the entrance opening from the aisle into the choir, in the transept, was placed a coffin, covered with a crimson velvet pall. It was that of Schonberg, whose remains it was then intended should finally rest in Westminster Abbey, but which were afterwards buried instead within the walls where they then lay, and within which they will continue to lie, in all probability, till the day of doom. As the king reached this spot, one of his officers whispered a word in his ear, and William stopped somewhat abruptly, paced a step or so towards the coffin, and looked upon it steadfastly, and, as it seemed, sadly; then shook his head slowly, and said aloud—

"Few like him left—few like him left." And then, after a brief pause, he added—"Good Schonberg! we trust he rests in God!"

This incident, the entire unaffectedness of the king's brief but mournful apostrophe, and the deeper solemnity which darkened his grave features as he moved onward, impressed his subjects with a respectful interest, which, if possible, enhanced the enthusiasm with which they regarded their deliverer, who, as they well knew, had in the same fight which had laid the tenant of that coffin low, hazarded his own life, again and again, with an unreserve the most daring and devoted.

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The service was now concluded, and Sir Hugh having taken leave of his companion, and waiting until the crowd had in some measure dispersed, paced the great aisle of the rude old building from end to end; and as will often happen in such cases, while thus occupying the interval, he fell unconsciously into meditation. The king, officers, guards, and all were now departed, the eager crowds gradually broke into detachments and dispersed, and Sir Hugh remained, except for one other solitary pedestrian, wholly alone in the deserted building. His companion was a man apparently of some three score years, with a stooping carriage, and a slight limp as he walked; he had long grizzled hair, which had once been red, a smoky brown complexion, projecting underjaw, and a keen fiery dark eye; he was plainly dressed in a sober and somewhat threadbare garb of snuff-coloured cloth, and one of his hands carried a walking-stick, on which he leaned with considerable emphasis. As Sir Hugh, for about the twentieth time, passed this singular and somewhat repulsive-looking person, the stranger on a sudden accosted him with the salutation—"Good day, sir;" the knight returned the greeting, and the stranger, thus encouraged, proceeded:—

"A glorious sermon, sir—a moving discourse," he observed with much fervency. "Doctor King, is indeed, sir, a precious instrument—precious, truly, as that other most honourable vessel, which hath been cracked and broken, alas! like a vile potsherd, only a few days since, by the rebels' shot—I mean that man of God—that minister of peace—that holy preacher of fire and sword—that most Christian dragoon and doctor of divinity—Governor Walker, who saved Derry by his holy zeal, undergoing in his own proper person the double duties of parson and bombardier—from the pulpit to the bastion, sir, and back again—preaching and battering by turns, exhorting saints to earn paradise by blowing sinners to perdition, and in a word, going about everywhere doing good; alas, sir, that was an unlucky shot that rid the world of him; what a bishop he would have made!"

Sir Hugh looked once or twice at the speaker, but though his tone, as well as his rhapsodical language, was as it seemed that of irony and sarcasm, yet his countenance and gestures betrayed no indication of the kind, nevertheless there was something in the whole apostrophe sufficiently sinister to arm the reserve of the old knight, who contented himself with simply bowing in reply.

"Well, sir," continued the old man, raising one hand slightly, and turning up the whites of his eyes, "he's gone to heaven, in a buff jerkin and jack-boots, for he died as he lived, in harness; he's disposed of—so much the worse, sir, for us, Protestant boys—so much the worse, though after all we must not despair—there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught. I doubt if even he, that holy man of Bible and bullet, Walker himself, could have delivered a more seasonable discourse—a more edifying and sustaining harangue than that we have heard to-day. Doctor King, sir, has earned a bishopric; nay, he has earned even a higher promotion, may he get it! though methought indeed he sometimes soared a flight above the king himself, when for instance he likened his late majesty, James, to Lucifer, as you may remember, for as it seemed to me the king frowned, and looked dissatisfied; between ourselves, I fear me William of Nassau is not so good a Protestant by half as you and I were disposed to esteem him."

"It would seem to me sir," replied the knight, a little tartly, "that you are making yourself pleasant at the expense of ——"

"Nay, nay, say not so," interrupted he of the snuff-coloured suit, "what! *I* make myself pleasant, and at my years! pleasant about the solemn Walker! pleasant about a two hours' sermon! pleasant—pleasant—odds my life, sir, time has been when I should have pinked a man through the ribs for so much as hinting I could be pleasant on such subjects."

"You'll excuse me then, sir, if I confess myself at a loss to comprehend you," said Sir Hugh. "If you *be* serious, your discourse is, to say the least of it, somewhat extravagant, and by no means to my liking; I shall, therefore, with your leave——"

"Wish me good morning," suggested his companion, in an altered tone; and for the first time standing erect and firmly before him. "You're right, Sir Hugh Willoughby, though we part not company quite so soon as you would have us, you are right in holding my words to be the language of derision and contempt; but see you I am not here to bandy arguments and instances—hold we each our own opinions—you yours to your comfort, I mine at my peril; I have watched an opportunity to speak one word with you unobserved."

"Speak it then," said the old man, not a little surprised.

"Colonel Torlogh O'Brien," continued the stranger, lowering his voice, "lies badly wounded in this town; the lethargy of fever is upon him now; but two days since I promised him that if he reached the city in safety, I would inform *you*, Sir Hugh Willoughby, of his condition; and, if you desired it, lead you to his lodging, that with your own eyes you might see that he lives. You need not be told that secrecy is needful in a case like this; if, then, you desire to assure yourself of his safety, you may accompany me."

"I do indeed desire it—earnestly desire it," answered Sir Hugh, eagerly, "I would, however, fain know, if it may be so, to whom I speak?"

"An Irish gentleman, sir," answered the stranger, coolly and withal sternly; "my name is and can be no concern of yours; I have undertaken a message, which I have delivered; I make an offer which you may accept or refuse, as suits you best; in either case you preserve *of course* an honourable secrecy."

"Of course," echoed Sir Hugh, haughtily; and then added—"I am ready to go with you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

MARY'S ABBEY.

THE momentary change of gait and tone, to which we have just alluded, in the odd-looking stranger, was enough to assure Sir Hugh that his companion was supporting an assumed character, and maintaining a disguise. He was, however, constitutionally fearless; and, indeed, it needed, perhaps, more courage on the part of his companion, obnoxious as, perhaps, he was, to the powers now in the ascendancy, to trust his safety thus in the hands of a Whig gentleman, who had small reason to regard the friends of King James's cause with favour or affection.

At an easy pace they pursued their way, which led them to Essex-Bridge (then but a few years open, and long since rebuilt from the foundations), and having crossed the river, they plunged into a series of narrow lanes and streets, many of them resembling those of a crowded village rather than of a metropolis—some of the houses that composed them little better than hovels, some thatched, and others tiled, and all thrown together with a marvellous contempt of symmetry, and, as it seemed, of convenience too. The whole population, brute and human, appeared to have turned out, and to be lounging and loitering in the streets: men and women, pigs and children, dogs and poultry. A crowded listlessness pervaded the highways and alleys, such as may still be seen in many of the older quarters of our provincial towns, even to this day. Sir Hugh and his companion made their way through all this, and reached at last a mass of low, roofless buildings, which looked like ruinous stables. At the end of this row—the dreary effect of which was enhanced by the utter silence and desertion of the place—there stood a dingy, shattered wall, which showed here and there the traces of having once been battlemented. In a low broad, archway in this, was swinging a rotten door of oak, studded with rusty pins of iron. Quickening his pace, and throwing a hurried glance behind him, the unknown hastily pushed this open, and led Sir Hugh into a neglected grave-yard, overgrown with rank grass and nettles, from among which were peeping hundreds of old head-stones, of all heights and hues. The tall windows of an old and ruined church looked mournfully forth upon this deserted burial-ground, from the further extremity of the enclosure; a pile of confused rubbish and ruins at the right; and upon the other side, a mass of quaint old buildings, which seemed to have suffered almost as much from time as the rest had from violence. With the exception of a portion of one of these melancholy-looking tenements, the whole range appeared to have been given up to decay and utter desertion. Stone-shafted windows and dark door-ways, through which the breeze sighed and moaned desolately enough, looked sadly out upon the waving grass and grey head-stones of the little church-yard. From one tall chimney only, among the group, a thin curl of smoke was rising.

"You know this place?" inquired his conductor.

"Mary's Abbey; is it not?" rejoined Sir Hugh.

"It is so," answered he; "and once more I have to remind you, sir, that you have engaged to observe a strict and honourable secrecy.

am now introducing you to the haunts of men, some of whom are, like *myself*--proscribed and desperate; and all of whom have, at least, strong reasons for concealing, in impenetrable mystery, their present abode, which, destitute of every other recommendation, presents, at least, the one advantage of security."

Sir Hugh repeated his assurances of secrecy, and they both ascended a flight of some dozen stone steps, which slanted along the front of the building in question, and terminated before a small door, which was at once opened to the stranger's summons, by a huge, ill-looking fellow, whom Sir Hugh had some indistinct remembrance of having seen before. The door being closed again, Sir Hugh found himself with his new companion in a low, long room, grudgingly lighted by a single narrow shot-hole rather than a window, and even that half stopped with old clothes and other mufflers. There was scarcely a fragment of furniture in the chamber; a fire glowed under the yawning chimney, and afforded the chief illumination of which the room could boast; a loft overhead, whose boarding had once formed the ceiling, was now rotted and shattered; and through its gaping apertures, and the fissures of the broken roof, the obstructed light of day was drearily peeping. The tall, ungainly, moving figure who had acted as janitor was now smoking by the fire—it was Hogan.

"Welcome home, Mr. Ryan," said he at length, sulkily enough. "An' who is it's with you?—aiah! be the laws ——" and with this broken ejaculation Mr. Hogan burst into a sudden and unpleasant fit of laughter.

"I've seen *you* somewhere," said Sir Hugh, doubtfully.

"No matther—no matther—never mind," said Hogan, stirring the ashes of his pipe, and grinning into the bowl of it all the while, "we'll be good friends yet, please God; bar the door, Ned," he continued, "it's not a spy you are, is it?"

"This gentleman has come here at my request; he has pledged his honour to keep the secrecy of our hiding-place," answered Ryan, "there's nothing to fear from him."

"I'm forced to wear this disguise," said Ryan, with a shrug and a smile of bitterness; "we lead pretty much the life of the fox—hiding now, preying again, and seldom safe but when we are earthed. When Colonel O'Brien wakes, I shall hear, and then conduct you to his chamber; until then we must not disturb him—I have so promised."

They sunk now into a gloomy silence, which was at last broken by Hogan, who took the pipe he had now finished from his mouth, and looking with a surly melancholy at the hearth, said on a sudden—

"I thought I heard the banshee last night, Eaman; I thought I heard her, sure enough, cryin' through the graves an' the ould buildings, as sweet an' as beautiful as a colleen that 'id be cryin' after her lover, down in our own sweet Munster, where I wisht in my heart we wor both iv us now."

There was something almost pathetic in the rough tones of Hogan as he said this, and in his face an ominous look of gloom and doubt, which, perhaps, impressed his companion unpleasantly.

"Come, come, Hogan," he said, briskly, "what dismays you now: I never saw you cast down before?" and, after a pause, he broke into the Irish language.

Sir Hugh, who understood it, however, thoroughly, intimated as much; and with an angry growl, and an angrier glance, Hogan again sank for a time into sullen silence. At last he said again, relapsing into the same vein of gloomy association, which seemed to have fastened upon his fancy—

"I thought I heard her more than half the night; I never heard sweeter. I remember the time, Eaman, that same cryin'—through the graves there, in the night, so soft and dark—would have made me drop tears in plenty; but it is not that way it takes me now. Aiah, wisha! wisha! I'm misdoubtin' there's something wrong; there's death in that cryin,' Eaman—mind my words, there's something in it—*death* in it, Eaman, for me or for you."

At this moment, a careless step was heard upon the stone stair outside, and a knocking ensued at the door. Hogan and Ryan exchanged a quick, ominous glance, as they suddenly arose, and impressed silence upon their visiter by a peremptory gesture.

We must here glance for a moment at the cause of this interruption.

As Sir Hugh, accompanied by his guide, entered the chamber, where they were now immured, and closed the door behind them—a rustling might have been observed in the rubbish of one of the roofless buildings, which stood in this melancholy quadrangle; and, after a moment, the wiry form and sinister face of our old acquaintance, Deveril, arose cautiously from among the loose piles of stones and tiles, and advancing with as little noise as possible to the window, he looked into the inclosure, and in all directions, before he even ventured to speak out—

"Well," he exclaimed at last, with a chuckle, which had in it an indescribable mixture of exultation, villainy, and something very like fear—"well, who was right? we have found the form, and, egad, the hare's sitting. Come, be lively; the plan's your own as much as mine, so don't turn tail now like a cur. Come, I say, what the devil ails you?"

This concluding interrogatory was delivered with much suppressed vehemence; for the countenance on which he looked bore an expression so very unlike what he had expected to find there, that the contrast almost startled him—

"What? are you afraid of brother Snap! what; will nothing but burnt brandy screw you up to the point?"

This encouragement was addressed, as the reader has no doubt perceived, to no less a person than our old acquaintance, Jeremiah Tisdal, who, somewhat more blotched, as well as somewhat less brawny than of yore, now rose slowly from the same well devised-post of observation, from which Deveril had only just emerged.

"I saw him," answered Tisdal, with a look of terror and dislike; "I saw him, I tell you."

"Who, man?—speak out," retorted Deveril, in an impatient whisper.

"One whom I fear to see more than the father of ill himself," replied Tisdal, with a shudder.

"Puh man—you mean the old knight, Sir Hugh. Eh?" replied Deveril, sharply. "Why, roast me, but you're turned out a regular old woman; curse you, this is no time to trifle. *I* wont be trifled with; stir yourself."

"I'll not go into the same room, or under the same roof with that old man," said Tisdal, doggedly; "I have so much grace left."

"Grace, indeed; why, you devil's meat—but no matter; you had ever, while I can remember, the same dogged temper," said Deveril, with something like disgust. "You had always a good thick pig's-head of your own, so have your own way. Do you go for the men, then; bring them round quietly and quickly; and mind, as *you* hang fire, you must only pay for it. I take one-half; the rest goes among you and your pals."

Deveril examined the flints and priming of his pistols, as also the charge, and then dropped one of them into each of his two heavy coat-pockets, where they lay perfectly concealed; so that for any thing to the contrary appearing, he might have really been, as he desired to appear, a perfectly unarmed man.

"All right," he said, with a pale and distorted smile. "Now go you, and do your part, such as it is; and I stake my life on't, Ned Ryan's head shall stick over the castle gate by to-morrow, and we fob the gold."

"Enough—enough," said Tisdal, with renewed alacrity. "Get thee on, so soon as I have been gone for so long as may bring me to the place where they await us—I will not fail thee."

With these words, Tisdal scrambled over the loose stones and rubbish, and pushed his unwieldly bulk through one of the narrow loop-holes in the back wall, and so made his way through the rear, to the spot where a corporal and four men, at scarce a quarter of a mile distance, were awaiting his arrival.

Meanwhile, Deveril having suffered as long a time to elapse as he conceived to be prudent without taking any further step, at length rubbed off so much of the dust and cobwebs he had contracted as were removable, and coming forth, shook the folds of his dress free of the creases impressed by his constrained attitude, then, with the usual cock in his hat, and whistling as he went in affected *nonchalance*, he mounted the stone steps, and knocked, as we have seen, at the door which had so recently closed upon Sir Hugh and the rapparee.

In obedience to the gestures of his two companions, Sir Hugh, whose situation was beginning to be anything but a pleasant one, observed a strict silence, while Hogan mounted a table, and looked cautiously forth from the little window. He beheld Deveril standing alone at the door, with his ear to the planks, and his mouth a-gape, obviously intent on hearing whatever might pass previously to his own admission. He also saw below his own shock-headed attendant, the boy whom we have mentioned elsewhere. This wild, elf-like creature shook his head with an expression of urgent menace, pointed to Deveril, unseen by that gentleman, then drew his finger significantly across his own throat, and in the next moment he had vanished. This intimation was not lost upon his patron. Hogan descended, leaving Deveril still in the same fixed attitude of attention, and from time to time renewing his summons at the door, while he whispered emphatically in Ryan's ear the word—"Danger."

"How many of them are there?" asked he.

"But *one*," answered he—"but one *now*."

"Then let him in;" said Ryan, decisively. And forthwith the bars were removed, and Deveril entered.

"Friends—friends," ejaculated Deveril, with an appearance of relieved anxiety—"friends, egad, and in common troubles. Here at least I am safe, if, that is, you will consent to harbour me, until I can either creep out of the town unobserved, or else change these tell-tale clothes."

"Sit down by the fire—you call us friends—treat us like friends. Sit down, I say—sit by the fire," said Ryan.

Deveril had not expected to find Hogan there; for he was, spite of all his efforts to appear at his ease, a little disconcerted and undecided for a few moments. It wore off, however, and he sat down in the place indicated, Hogan meanwhile watching, with an intense, though scarcely perceptible, vigilance, every movement of his, as a huge, hungry cat might those of a domesticated magpie. One look of significance, the faintest and quickest imaginable, the two raparees exchanged.

"Sir Hugh," said Ryan, "come hither." At the same time he beckoned him into an inner room."

The knight complied. It was smaller and darker, and in every respect more comfortless than the other. The floor was covered with heavy flagging, and seizing a crow-bar which lay ready among some straw, Ryan raised one of the heaviest of these flags, and disclosed a flight of steps, such as in old churches lead down into the crypts.

"These lead to the vaults. When you reach the last step of hirty, turn to your right, and walk straight on, guided by the wall at your right hand, until you see light. You will there find better entertainment than here, and you will also discover him whom you desire to see. You are expected, and, therefore, need not fear for your safety. You must now waste no time, for we are about to have bad work here. That soldier is a spy and a traitor."

"'Twas ill managed to suffer that prying scoundrel to discover this place of concealment," said Sir Hugh, who instinctively disliked the ill-looking musketeer.

"Not so," said Ryan, gloomily and hurriedly; "he'll never tell that secret to living man—*that's* settled; and now, Sir Hugh, get you down—trust me—you *have* trusted me already—your life has been in my hands since I met you in Saint Patrick's—trust me now—and remember that whatever be my misfortunes, I cherish at least the honour of a gentleman."

Nothing daunted, Sir Hugh began to descend the steep steps, and with a reverberation which echoed through unseen vaults, the massive stone at the orifice fell again into its place, leaving him to grope his way as best he might in utter darkness.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PATIENT—THE TRAITOR'S FATE—THE MILLS OF GLINDARRAGH.

As Sir Hugh descended, the cold earth damps that lurked in those dismal regions gathered oppressively around him—the darkness was complete, and he heard, as he advanced, the rats scampering through unseen passages, and living things, he knew not what, flopping and floundering upon the wet pavement under his feet. Thus he pursued with extreme caution, and scarcely less anxiety than disgust, his dubious course—now actually treading upon one of the huge rats that swarmed there, with a tameness shocking enough in all conscience—now encountering with his outstretched hand a pile of rotten coffins, which came down at the touch, with a rattle and reverberation that startled the involuntary intruder. At last, however, his perplexities were ended by a gleam of fire light, shining through the crevices of a distant door, and with renewed confidence, and a quickened pace, he stepped onward to the place, and knocked hastily for admission.

"Who's there?" asked a voice from within, suspending a low wild song in which it had been exercised.

"Sir Hugh Willoughby," replied the knight, instinctively giving his name, although with small likelihood, as it seemed, of being recognized there; such, however, was not the case—on the contrary, the door was instantly unbarred, and Sir Hugh found himself in a stone chamber, furnished with a huge hearth, and indented with dozens of odd niches and nooks, quaint and unsymmetrical, and which even widowed of the clocks and presses, and wine-bins, which doubtless had in old times lodged cosily within their embrace, had yet a certain comfortable irregularity of aspect, which prevented the chamber appearing quite so desolate as it might have done.

It was such a chamber, as alike from its revolting vicinity to death and decay, its incongruous air of ruined jollity and bygone comfort, and the circuitous and horrible nature of its approaches, might well have been the scene of some of those unclean and mysterious orgies which modern scandal has referred to the age of monkish hypocrisy and crime.

Shutting the door, and barring it as before, the inmate of the chamber, who wore a tattered, military coat, motioned Sir Hugh to remain by the fire; and himself proceeded into another chamber, opening off that in which they stood. He returned almost instantly, and desiring Sir Hugh to follow, he led him into the room.

It was also vaulted like the former. A wretched, extempore bed, covered with a military cloak, supported the wounded form of Torlogh O'Brien—a solitary candle shed a dim, comfortless light over the dreary scene—and a dapper little gentleman, whose pursy face plainly enough expressed that he did not very well know which to be most affronted or frightened at his situation, sate upon a rough wooden stool by the bedside, holding the patient's hand, and regarding his watch the while with a pugnacious leer from the corner of his eyes. There was in the punctilious adjustment, brand-new gloss, and accurate finish in every particular, of the little gentleman's dress, a contrast to the dreary and sombre desolation and surrounding recklessness, which, under other circumstances, would have provoked Sir Hugh to smile.

As he entered, the patient turned his head, and showed the pale face and sunken eye of fever; he smiled, however, faintly, and would have striven to rise, but the little gentleman peremptorily prevented it—enjoined Sir Hugh to stand where he was, and observe silence; and then proceeded to demonstrate the danger which must attend the utterance of so much as a dozen words by the patient.

Spite, however, of all he could do, the words were spoken, answered, and spoken again; and what was more, the patient, instead of dying, appeared much the better of the experiment. After a short time, however, it became apparent that he was really beginning to be exhausted; and Sir Hugh having withdrawn, Torlogh O'Brien sank, greatly to the physician's edification, into a profound sleep.

The little man joined Sir Hugh in the large room, and sat down, in like manner, by the fire—the uncouth attendant shambling, in grim taciturnity, into the sick man's chamber, there to keep watch while he slept.

* * * * * * *

Return we now to the two rapparees, whom we left in the upper chamber of this dilapidated building, in familiar communion with the cool-headed musketeer, our old friend, Deveril, whose mission involves so much alike of danger and of hope, to himself.

Sullenly and silently the three companions sate in the ruinous and darksome chamber we have described. Again and again did Deveril, as the time wore on, and brought him every moment nearer to the critical point, which was to determine his own fate and that of the two men with whom he sat, wish himself, whether for good or ill, fairly out of suspense. The door was barred, as we have said, and Deveril began to eye its ponderous bolt with no small uneasiness.

"What," he bethought him, "were the two desperadoes, whom he designed to betray, to suspect his mission, ere his accomplices could force these barriers, and come to his succour!"

The thought, however, did not dismay him, for at every movement he felt the pressure of the heavy horse-pistols which swung in his pockets. *These*, at least, were a pair of friends, good at need, and whose honesty even he suspected not.

At length the long-expected moment arrived—steps were heard outside.

"Deveril," said Hogan, carelessly addressing the soldier, who had risen, "mount that barrel, will you, and look through the window: there's some one stirring outside."

Deveril ascended the post of observation accordingly, and Hogan exchanged a significant look with Ryan.

"Well," he continued, "what do you see there?"

"It's one of ourselves," said Deveril, clearing his voice, which was a little broken and husky; "it's one of ourselves, an unfortunate fellow called Tisdal, that was witness against old Willoughby—do you remember? I suppose he's hard up for a hiding hole, like the rest of us."

As he thus spoke, Deveril had descended, and stood for a moment between the barrel and the door, undecided, with his hands in his coat pockets.

"He is a safe man—isn't he?" asked Hogan carelessly; "let him in; it id be a hard thing, surely, when the dogs is loose, to stop the earth against a poor devil of an old fox like that; open the door, I say."

Deveril turned carelessly on his heel, and approached the door; his heart swelled almost to bursting, and the hand which he raised to the bar was damp and cold as clay with agitation. His hand was raised, but it did not reach the bar; for a light sound struck his ear, and quick as light he turned. He turned and saw a sight of terror—close to his shoulder, a human countenance, livid and distorted with the fearful energy of hate. There was this face, and an upraised arm. For one breathless instant it was revealed, and in the next, Deveril lay quivering and tumbling like an epileptic, upon the floor; and Hogan, stooping over him, with a second blow despatched him.

"Now, Ned—now," said Hogan. "Shoulder to shoulder—we'll do them yet."

"Drag back the body," said Ryan, "while I stand by the door. There," he continued; "now, one look from the window, without showing yourself. Quick, man—quick."

Meanwhile, although this occupied scarcely half a minute, those without began to grow impatient. First came a low whistle, then a louder one; and, at last, a peremptory knocking at the door. Hogan had mounted the inverted barrel so lately occupied by the wretched Deveril, and reconnoitered stealthily the position of the enemy. Two sturdy soldiers were standing on the little stair platform before the elevated doorway; another, backed by Tisdal, occupied the stair; and the sergeant himself stood underneath, upon the ground, no doubt conceding to his subordinates the post of danger, in the generous belief that it was also that of honour. Hogan jumped lightly to the floor; hitched up his breeches, pressed down his hat upon his brows, and drew the buckle of his belt a hole or so tighter.

"Are you ready?" he asked of his companion.

Ryan assented.

"Now for it, then. Stand fast. I'll take the stairs—you the other scoundrel and the sergeant."

He then applied himself leisurely to undo the iron bars which secured the door. Responding to the impatient and repeated summons of the soldiers in a tone of terrified and deprecating entreaty, which seemed but to stimulate the insolence of their assault.

At last the task was ended; and Hogan, drawing a long breath in preparation of the stupendous effort he meditated, on a sudden swung back the door; with one blow of his Herculean fist smote the foremost of them headlong to the ground, a distance of nearly a dozen feet; hurled the next backward down the precipitous steps, with irresistible violence, carrying Tisdal and his companion along with him. And at the same moment Ryan sprang lightly to the ground, and ere he had recovered from his astonishment, thrust his rapier twice through the serjeant, who fell senseless to the earth.

Amid shouts and curses, with the bleeding rapier still in his hand, he vaulted nimbly through the window of the ruined church; while Hogan, with a wild halloo, sprang through the archway beneath the central tower. A shot from the musket of the only one of the soldiers who had escaped untouched, struck up the tiles and rubbish between them as they ran; and in the next moment they had crossed the outer wall, and so pursuing devious ways, were gone—who could say whither?

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Sir Thomas Neville, as we have seen, had set his heart upon entirely and hopelessly dissolving whatever ties subsisted between his son, Percy, and the rustic maiden, whose aspiring audacity had filled him with so much horror and indignation. Of the actual nature of that connexion, he had, indeed, no suspicion. His measures, as we have seen, were promptly taken: the letters which his son had intended for poor Phebe, Sir Thomas, in the exercise of what he considered to be his paternal rights, intercepted and destroyed. Percy he managed to have removed to England, and he himself wrote a stern and peremptory letter to Phebe, which, if anything of which Percy himself was not the author, could have done so, would unquestionably have broken the poor girl's heart. So much importance did Sir Thomas attach to this affair, that he despatched a special messenger—a trusted domestic of his own—from Dublin, to bear this decisive document to its proper destination.

The messenger accordingly set forth, and at the first Irish outpost upon which he stumbled, procured a "protection," which carried him without adventure to his journey's close. It was evening as he turned into the little by-road, which, breaking off at the old bridge of Glindarragh, winds under oak and thorn trees along the river's brink, opposite the grey walls of the castle. A ride of little more than five minutes brought him to the now silent mills; and beyond this picturesque little group of buildings, and embowered in silvan seclusion, by the brook's side, stood the quaint farm house, with its steep thatch, and two stories of diamond casements, softly and sadly lighted in the mellow evening sun. In a moment more, the messenger stood in the homely chamber, occupied by our, now alas! mournfully altered—little friend, Phebe. Pale was her cheek and dim her eyes with untold watchings and patient sorrow. She rose, as he entered, with the untaught and artless grace with which nature had so beautifully endowed her. He intimated that he was a messenger from Dublin.

"Sir," said she, while her cheeks flushed with a bright and sudden glow, and then grew paler even than before, "Oh, sir, do you bring any news of—of *him?*"

"Mr. Percy Neville is in England," said the messenger, with involuntary respect. "He is in England; and I believe not likely to return for a long time——"

"Oh! did you see him?—is he well?" she said, hurriedly.

"Yes, well; very well—very well," answered the man.

"And is there—is there—have you"——she trembled so violently that she could not, for a moment, go on; "Is there any letter, any token—any message?"

"None from him," answered the messenger. "I have one from Sir Thomas, Mr. Percy's father—Sir Thomas Neville."

She took the letter with a trembling hand, and broke the seal. What it contained he knew not; but he saw in her face, first a momentary wildness, and then such a look of unutterable desolation and anguish as no limner could ever paint. In silence, she pressed her thin, clasped hands upon her side, as if in anguish insupportable, but no word betrayed her agony. She stood without motion, in the same woful attitude minute after minute. At length, nature relieved her bursting heart, and the tears flowed fast and silently down her cheeks.

"I feared it, I long feared it, sir; oh, how I dreaded it night and day; and now, it's come at last—after all, after all, the worst, the worst is come." She wept on in silence, wringing her little hands in untold agony. "Sir, I have no friend that is able to advise me in this great sorrow," she resumed at length; but I often thought, and I told him—I told him then, and I thought it many a time since—I was not worthy to be his wife—for I thought his people in England, sir, and all his great friends, could not like me the way *he* did; and when the time passed on, a year—oh, a long year—now, sir, and no tale or tidings of him, I began to think—for I could not help it—he was maybe wishing himself that it was all over—that he had never seen me, and I could not blame him even if he did; and it often came into my mind to write him word to get the marriage broken, and that I would not say against it—and but for one thing I think I would have written: the little child—*his* little child and mine. It was the lovingest, sweetest—all its little ways, and, oh, sir, it was so like himself—I think it often kept my heart from breaking. But it's there now, lying in that bed—it's dead and gone; oh, my darling—my darling—my darling."

She drew the curtain of the bed where lay the lifeless infant, and clasping its cold form to her heart, she kissed it, and wept, and wept, and kissed it again.

The messenger was leaving the room, but his heart was full—he turned again, and drying his eyes hastily, he took the poor mourner gently by the arm and said hastily—

"Never mind that letter—Master Percy knows nothing of it—he loves you better than his life—I *know* it well—and he'll be back soon, I tell you—*soon*—God knows I speak the truth."

And God bless thee, honest fellow, for thy frank compassion: in this parting sentence—a few words of rough pity and truth thus briefly spoken—thou hast bequeathed her a hope—one hope—without which the poor heart that shall cling to it, through many a day and month of disappointment, with desperate trust, would soon have lain as still and cold as the little form she folds so passionately in her lonely bosom.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

A DOUBLE RECOGNITION.

The political and military struggle in whose events the current of our tale is inwoven, was, as the reader is no doubt well aware, a singularly protracted one. It was not until the third year after the date of the English revolution that the Jacobite army was withdrawn from the shores of Ireland. To this, the closing year of the grand and tragic drama of Irish resistance, our story brings us. Nearly a full year has passed since the events recorded in our last chapter—a year which had witnessed William's ineffectual siege of Limerick, and Sarsfield's brilliant exploit, achieved in the interception and destruction of the heavy battering train and ammunition destined for the destruction of the beleaguered city. William's forces were, with the approach of winter, withdrawn, and the hopes of the Jacobite leaders again revived; meanwhile intrigue, ambition, and jealousy were at work in spreading dissension and its attendant weakness among the party of the exiled king. Tyrconnel, the haughty favourite, had become hateful to many, and suspected nearly by all. Sarsfield, a strange compound of vanity, devotion, sagacity, and daring, stimulated by the exaggerated admiration and praises of his satellites, now openly aspired to the chief command of James's army in Ireland; a post, which had he obtained it, he might have filled with signal effect. His boundless popularity—his daring promptitude, and strong common sense, were qualities which, in conjunction with his high rank and immense sacrifices, might reasonably have secured for him the object of his ambition. But French interests and intrigues prevailed, and the Marquis de St. Ruth was commissioned with a command, which Sarsfield had certainly earned by his services, and which he would probably have wielded, if not with ultimate success, at all events with better fortune than attended the foreigner.

The waste which had been so recklessly committed upon the country, now reacted with fearful disaster upon the very army whose licentiousness had wrought it. A dreadful scarcity, little short of famine, prevailed throughout the west and south, except in such parts as were accessible to supplies from abroad—and the Irish army was reduced to extremities which, perhaps, no other army in the world would have endured with a like patience, and indeed without disorganization or mutiny.

General St. Ruth had, as we have said already, arrived—a bold, energetic, and skilful officer—somewhat vain and obstinate, however, and having earned for himself already a bad notoriety by the severity with which he had executed several of the atrocious dragonades against the defenceless Huguenots of France. This latter ingredient in his military experience, was perhaps one of the qualifications which recommended him for a command, where, as in France, the faith of Rome was assumed to be contending with fire and sword against the powers of heresy.

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It was a lovely summer's night, then, in the year of grace, 1691, when a coach—one of those clumsy, straight-backed vehicles, which we see in old prints, came jogging and rumbling along a narrow road, somewhere in the rich county of Kildare, and between a double row of fine old trees. This vehicle contained two personages—a venerable old gentleman, richly dressed, and a beautiful girl, somewhat pensive, and dressed also as became a person of wealth and worship. Irish roads were by no means then what they have since become. A steep and broken acclivity made it necessary for the travellers to descend and walk, a task, however, which the softness and beauty of the night rendered pleasant rather than otherwise, and which no sense of danger or insecurity disturbed; for, as the reader is aware, the perils and uncertainties of war were now removed so far as the beleaguered town of Athlone, between which and the capital Ginkle's army interposed. The district through which wound the quiet road in question was safe as in the most tranquil time of peace. It was therefore with a feeling of perfect security that the young lady placed her arm through that of her venerable protector, and paused with him to enjoy, from the eminence they were ascending, the beautiful moonlit landscape that expanded before them.

At this moment a tall and stalworth figure stood near them. He had just descended from a footpath upon the road. He carried a rough walking staff in his hand, and was dressed as might beseem a thrifty yeoman, with a grey cloth mantle hanging upon his well-formed shoulders. He stopped—gazed on them intently, and exclaimed—

"Gracious heaven! can it—*can* it be they?"

"What!" said he, fervently, advancing toward them; "Grace, dear Grace—will you not know me?"

"How—who—Torlogh!" she gasped.

"Yes, dearest," he said, and in an instant Torlogh O'Brien stood by her side, paler and thinner, indeed, than when she had last seen him—but still her own betrothed and adored lover—"yes, your own true lover—your betrothed, and, if heaven spare me, your proud and happy partner through all the years of life in store fo us. Dearest,

dearest how I bless God for this chance meeting. Oh! that we were met here and now to part no more—dear, dearest Grace. And you, my kind, my dear, my honoured friend," he continued, addressing Sir Hugh, "what happiness—what fortune to meet you here. My letters reached you, did they not?" he proceeded, addressing Grace again.

"Oh, yes—but—but I have been very anxious, very wretched;" and the poor girl burst into tears; "are you—are you, indeed, *quite* recovered?"

"Quite, dearest, though my recovery has been slow, and long doubtful," he answered; "had they but given me my way, I should have been out and serving months ago; but when did a leech suffer his patient to slip through his fingers. As for me, I have been literally a prisoner among a set of good-natured savages, who, in the excess of their kindness, would, I believe, have knocked me on the head, rather than permitted my escape, until my strength and health were duly certified by a doctor of physic. I incline to think I've suffered more from this compulsory confinement than I could have done merely from my wounds."

"And, now," resumed she, looking earnestly in his face; "what means this strange dress—this disguise? Oh, Torlogh, I fear me you are again about to hazard your life and mine—for mine is now bound up in yours. If you die, Torlogh, I care no more for life: oh, tell me, tell me—say you will not hazard your life so soon again. Oh, Torlogh, dear Torlogh, I fear—I fear, we shall never meet more."

"And better even so, dearest," he answered, "than that you should wed a disgraced and dishonoured man. No, dear Grace, while my regiment serves in these wars—while I hold King James's commission, and have health and strength to carry my cuirass, and draw my sword, it never shall be said that Torlogh O'Brien was unseen upon the day of battle."

"The lad is right—aye, right in every syllable," said the old knight, with emotion. "Give me your hand again. I honour you, my friend, for your brave resolution, although, in truth, I would fain those honest barbarians had held you still in durance for a month or so longer."

Torlogh smiled, and then replied more gravely—

"This war is near it's close—everything proves the crisis is indeed upon us—a month, a week may see it ended. Ginkle is a rapid campaigner, and St. Ruth, his opponent, is an enterprizing general also. With such antagonists, war is a quick game, and the evil of suspense, at least, is not added to its other woes."

Thus the conversation was pursued, which, having so far followed, we need pursue no farther. Suffice it to say, that they parted with a thousand renewed and passionate pledges of undying love.

A hurried farewell, and the two fond hearts were once more severed. Away rolled the old-fashioned coach, by a quiet bye-road, in a southerly direction, where some five miles further, the knight and his fair daughter were to remain, for a time, the guests of an old friend, in a fine old rambling mansion, with terrace gardens, and long lonely fish ponds closed in with dark yew hedges, and boasting every scenic accessory, in a word, which a love-sick damsel need desire. Here we leave them until the military events, which as yet impend over the country, shall have determined finally the prudence or the danger of venturing a homeward journey to Glindarragh Castle.

Our resolute friend, meanwhile, with a firm and vigorous tread, pursued his way upon the morning following, loitering occasionally in the villages through which he passed, to learn, without suspicion, whatever he could glean of the movements of the contending armies.

The day was now spent, and the summer moon was sailing high in the heavens, and shone upon a dreary sweep of heathy hills, so low and gradual as scarcely to deserve that name; bleak and monotonous, the white mist lurking in the hollows began now to creep chilly over the dark slopes and undulations of the uplands, and not a living form, save that of our wayworn friend, was visible over the expanse. Still, with firm tread and constant purpose, he pursued his way, conscious, meanwhile, that as he approached the neighbourhood of the hostile armies, his own personal risk increased an hundred-fold. The perpetual danger—in his present uncertainty of the exact position of the contending parties—of falling in unexpectedly with some detachment of the enemy, was of itself enough to inspire anxiety, and whet his vigilance.

He knew the ground which he now trod, and remembered that a little village lay in the lap of the hill, just beyond the brow which he was now about to pass. Hunger and fatigue conspired to hasten his efforts to reach this humble resting-place, at which he proposed halting for the night. Accordingly, it was with a feeling of the extremest satisfaction that he found himself at last descending the ill-defined bridle-track which tended directly into the humble village; and now through the mist the outlines of the clustering gables and tufted bushes became apparent; but no note or sign of life, no baying of dogs, no sound of human voices, no twinkling light, met eye or ear, as he approached: all was dark and still. He now stood in the street (if so it might be called) of the desolated village; blackened walls, and gables, and charred roof-trees, and mounds of ashes spread drearily around him; and both the silence and desertion of the hour inspired a feeling almost akin to fear.

"What!" said he, as he halted in indecision, amid this bleak, unsightly wreck: "could they not spare this poor cluster of wretched hovels!" He looked around him, and involuntarily ejaculated, "Woe to that poor land within whose fields and towns the strife of war maintains itself!—*all* smitten, the poor and the rich alike—the high and the lowly! How many an humble home is roofless here!—how many a hearth is quenched and black! and heaven only knows, beside, how many a poor peasant heart lies mouldering beneath these ashes! Alas! for this stricken country!—woe! woe!"

As he said this, standing among the trees that had once sheltered the little groups of villagers, now scattered heaven knew whither, he was startled by a shrill and prolonged whistle, as it seemed scarce a hundred yards away, and which rang through the blackened ruins like the shriek of some ill-omened bird responding to his desolate apostrophe. Glad, however, of anything that intimated the vicinity of human life, Torlogh O'Brien shouted lustily in reply; and thus, sustaining a continued interchange of signals, he and the unknown were soon confronted. The latter, however, was not unaccompanied; two other men followed him closely; and all three halted within little more than a yard of our hero, a strange looking group enough. The foremost had on a tattered militia coat, overlaid with dirty white lace. He wore a rough cap of black sheepskin, and a pair of trooper's jack-boots; and as he came up he unslung a musket, and handled it as if for instant use. His companions were bearded, shock-haired, bare-legged, and bare-headed creatures—one of them wrapped in the ancient crescent-shaped mantle, which Spenser has celebrated, and the other with nothing but his rags about him, and a stout half pike in his hand. All this was clearly visible enough under the bright moonlight.

"Who is she?" said the fellow in the shaggy cap, which presented the appearance of a preternaturally enormous head of shaggy hair: "Who is she?" he repeated, with a threatening oath, in Irish, and at the same time cocking his piece.

"I am a traveller, and have walked not far from forty miles to-day," he answered calmly, and finding my expected resting-place in ashes, am now constrained to pursue my way still further, and expect you to direct me on my course."

"*Thonnom an dhioul*—she's a shentlemans," ejaculated the same speaker, "I know by hur talk—a shentleman."

"And what then—suppose I *were* a gentleman?" said Torlogh.

"Why then—d—n you for a figgish son of a bish," he retorted promptly, and at the same time he brought the musket to his shoulder.

"Stop—listen—mark what you do; if you slay me, friend, you kill one of king James's officers," said Torlogh, sternly. "I hold the king's commission, and am now on my way to join the army, and resume my command."

"Shew hur protection," said the same man, after a pause of indecision, and lowering the butt of his piece.

"I travel under no protection but my own," retorted Torlogh; "I have, however, better proof of the truth of my words than any protection, were it from the Duke of Tyrconnel himself, could furnish; I carry my commission with me; and by its production I will prove myself at least as true a friend to Ireland as you are."

After a brief altercation, accordingly, Torlogh was conducted by his rude companions out of the town, and diverging from the ill-defined road which he had hitherto followed, they descended into an abrupt hollow, in the centre of which was burning a prodigious fire, round which were congregated a number of figures variously and picturesquely illuminated, partly by the cold moonlight, and partly by the glare of the turf and "brusna." A little apart was a slaughtered cow, which had probably supplied the greater part of the cheer on which they were feasting.

"Ha—Ryan!" said Torlogh, the moment his eye lighted upon the group, and in a moment Eaman a knuck was before him.

CHAPTER L.

THE OUTPOST.

Torlogh O'Brien was now a welcome guest at the savage feast, of which, however, he was fain enough to avail himself; and sooth to say, to a hungry and exhausted man worse might possibly have been welcome. As they discussed this cheer, seasoned with many a draft of usquebagh and brandy, Torlogh learned that the party was a kind of rear-guard to another, who being now in safety had proceeded, leading with them fourteen dragoon horses, the fruit of a cleverly-contrived surprise, executed by the rapparees on the night preceding.

From Ryan he learned further that William's forces were now in possession of Athlone, and that St. Ruth had withdrawn his army to Aghrim, where it was rumoured he had resolved to give the enemy battle. He also learned that the little town of Aghrim, where they were now in position, was distant some five and twenty miles; and that considerable supplies, arms, ammunition, clothing, and money, but no men, except a handful of troopers who accompanied the general, as a body-guard, had reached the country along with St. Ruth. Of him the rapparees could say but little; he had arrived but a few weeks since, and Sarsfield and he had already had several angry and bitter altercations.

Having thus gleaned all the information he could, Torlogh O'Brien stretched himself upon the hearth, near the fire, and was soon fast asleep. With the first gleam of the opening dawn, the bivouac was all astir again; another meal of savage plenty ushered in the day—after which Ryan undertook to conduct his guest a mile or so upon his journey.

As side by side they walked onward, each felt the cheering influences of the early day. The slanting sunbeams shot ruddily athwart the brown sweeping undulations of the hills they were descending—the dew-drops sparkled in the heath, from among whose purple tufts ever and anon the merry lark soared upward and upward into the sky, until all but his thrilling matin melted into air; the fresh bracing breath of morning, and the lowing of distant kine from the fields beneath them, and the thousand pleasant scents, and sounds, and influences that hail the opening day, inspired with feelings akin to joy and confidence, the breasts of both, as they trod the downward path, and looked abroad over the ruddy and expansive prospect.

Having bid his companion farewell, Torlogh O'Brien soon struck into a narrow road, designing to cross the Shannon by the fords, a little below the point now known as Shannon Bridge. Torlogh O'Brien was well aware of the risk he incurred of falling in, accidentally, with some straggling party of William's army, from whom (were his real character discovered), he might very possibly receive the roughest usage. He was not sorry, therefore, to meet at a sudden turning of the road, a pedlar marching leisurely along toward him, with his pack strapped upon his shoulders, and his measuring staff, studded with brass nails, glittering like a sceptre in his grasp. He, therefore, accosted this "travelling merchant," and learned from him that the road, as far as he had travelled it, was free from all obstruction.

"Which army have you seen?" asked Torlogh.

"Faix, then, I seen both iv them," he replied; "the likes iv me have no business takin' part with this side or that side, but just to mind my business, an' take the world aisy."

"Have you been delayed or annoyed by either?" said O'Brien; "have you been allowed to drive your trade without hindrance or molestation?"

"An' why would not I?" he rejoined; "it's only too glad they'd be to see the likes iv me coming near them; hindherance, indeed, is that all ye know about it?"

Torlogh O'Brien mused for a moment, and then said—

"If you be willing to sell your pack and measure, as they are, for a lump sum, you shall have it on the spot. What say you—will you sell them?"

The offer was promptly acceded to, and after a brief negociation, the purchase was completed—the disembarrassed pedlar pursued his way with the gold pieces, which might have fairly bought his possessions thrice over, stored safely within his waistband; and Torlogh O'Brien, with the staff in his hand, and the burthen slung across his stalworth shoulders, strode onward toward his destination, with renewed confidence—and, indeed, comparatively careless as to whom he might encounter, under his assumed character.

Evening was drawing on apace, when from a gradual eminence he beheld some three miles before him the broad Shannon, glowing like burnished gold under the fiery summer sun.

A few miles more, he thought—a few miles beyond that glorious barrier, and I am again at the head of my brave Irish soldiers. He listened for the distant sound of cannon, in the instinctive anxiety of the brave man who fears lest his part in a grand impending struggle should be denied him. "The breeze favours," he resumed; "the guns would be audible from hence; thank God, all is still—I am in time."

With renewed energy, and something of the deep and stirring excitement of coming battle already upon him, Torlogh O'Brien strode onward upon the narrow and unfrequented road, toward the ford which lay before him.

The train of busy thought which had followed the reflections we have just mentioned, was interrupted on a sudden by the jingle of a horse's hoof, and in less than a minute, a tall, rawboned, military chaplain, in a somewhat rusty cassock, a plain, broad-leafed hat, and military boots, and a good deal to Torlogh's uneasiness, attended by two mounted dragoons, rode at a leisurely walk, from a converging road, right into that which he himself was pursuing.

To have attempted to avoid this unexpected cavalcade, in which his practised eye instantly detected the adherents of the Prince of Orange, could have no other effect than that of exciting suspicion.

"Hola! halt there, sirrah!" cried the chaplain, for he was a little in the rear; "halt, I say, and right about."

As Torlogh saw nothing for it but to sustain his assumed character as best he might, he unhesitatingly obeyed this unceremonious order, and the same grave functionary, fixing a small eye, which owed its overpowering effect, entirely to the fiery purple of the massive face in which it was set, full upon the pedestrian, said, signing to him at the same time to march by his side—

"What may be your calling, friend—and that upon your back—what's *that*, eh? Speak up, man—speak out, I charge you."

"As for my calling, sir, I'm a pedlar," answered Torlogh, with difficulty assuming the outward deference of respect, "and that I carry is my pack."

Torlogh paused abruptly, for in his momentary confusion he had failed to perceive what he now observed for the first time, the horse which his interrogator bestrode, was no other than Roland—his own brave charger, lost at the action of the Boyne, and now encountered again under circumstances so altered. Well was it for Torlogh that the grave cavalier mistook the nature of the good steed's demonstrations—the cocking of his ears—his snortings, and champings.

"Tush, Captain—go to—go to, I say," ejaculated his rider, checking him once or twice; "quiet, I say, we must not bite the poor for being poor—God forbid; nay, nay, honest man, fear him not," he continued, addressing Torlogh, "he is used to dragoons, and loves not any else; but fear him not, he knows his rider. A pedlar and a pack—so—so—and I dare aver, not sorry to find a market for some of his wares; now, what may you have to sell—eh?"

The question was somewhat disconcerting, as Torlogh knew just as little as the questioner what might be the contents of the pack; he answered, therefore, promptly and deferentially—

"If your honour be likely to buy—I can't do less than unpack and show my wares."

"Time enough—time enough," rejoined the chaplain; "be not too hot after mammon, friend. There's a time to buy, and a time to sell; and I'll do neither the one nor the other, I promise you until I get out of the saddle. But come along—come along, and we'll soon see what may be done.

Accordingly, very little obliged to his ungainly patron, Torlogh O'Brien continued to walk by his stirrup, answering as briefly as he might the questions which he showered upon him, until, on a sudden, they came upon a large dilapidated farm house, with a stone enclosure, and a cluster of offices about it, peeping out among the tufted timbers of an old overgrown orchard. It was quite evident that this place was occupied by a troop of dragoons; for two dismounted troopers, with their pieces shouldered, kept guard before the gateway upon the road;

and some dozen of horses, still saddled, but with the girths loose, were visible in the open shed in the yard.

"Now, then," ejaculated the cavalier in the cassock, as he dismounted—"now, then, we can see what you have got to sell. No want of customers here, I warrant you; so come along. In with you, pack and all—in—in, I say."

Thus encouraged, Torlogh O'Brien had no choice in prudence but to comply; and accordingly, preceded by the chaplain, and followed by the soldiers, leading their horses, he entered the enclosure, where the dragoons were loitering in groups, and thence into the house, whose door stood open, and the little party proceeded directly into a large chamber, dilapidated and damp-stained, and which had once been a cosey kitchen, and was now little better than a wreck. They found here a group of officers, who stood listlessly chatting and looking out of the shattered windows, dusty, and with their hats on, just as they had dismounted. Scarce a moment had elapsed ere the supposed pedlar was established at the head of the only table the room possessed, and his goods displayed before the little group, who clustered about him. While thus engaged, he observed a countenance pass the outside of the window, the sight of which filled him, reasonably enough, with dismay. It was that of Miles Garrett.

He fortunately had not removed his hat, and he pressed it deeper upon his brows as that personage entered the chamber. Miles Garrett, who was, as it seemed, in command of the detachment, took his place among the rest at the table, and joined in their careless comments upon the wares displayed before them. The trying scene was now, as Torlogh hoped, drawing rapidly to a close; when, greatly to his uneasiness, he observed Garrett look sharply once or twice at his features, as if desiring to see more than the broad flap of his hat rendered easily visible.

"Friend pedlar," he said, at last, abruptly interrupting a bargain, "methinks it were scarce more than courtesy to doff your hat in presence of *gentlemen*, who are honoured, moreover, with the King's commission—take it off, sir; take it off, I say."

These words—their peremptory tone—the suspicious glance that accompanied them—all showed Torlogh that concealment or evasion was no longer possible. He drew himself up to his full height, returning Garrett's glance of exulting malignity and recognition with one of proud and reckless defiance, and for a moment they both stood face to face, in breathless silence, amid the wondering soldiers.

"Ha! he's netted at last," said Garrett, under his breath, and as it seemed unconsciously; while he continued to regard him with the same fixed and triumphant smile of malignity.

"Well, Mr. Pedlar," he exclaimed with chuckling triumph, "so it seems you *won't* uncover, eh?"

"Not to you," retorted Torlogh, with the intense sternness of hatred and despair. "Cold-blooded, murderous intriguer—betrayer of your friends, of your faith, of your King—wretch and renegade, uncover to *you!*—steeled as you are in effrontery and crime, and with all your soldiers round you—how dare you, abominable wretch—how dare you ask an honest man to do you reverence?"

As Torlogh, with flashing eyes, and a voice hoarse with passion, concluded this furious address, his hand mechanically sought the place where his sword-hilt might have been.

"Ho, corporal; hola, guards," shouted Garrett, stamping on the floor, and raising a pistol to the level of Torlogh's breast, "Move—attempt to escape—*move*, and I fire. Guards there, hola."

A single spring brought Torlogh up to his opponent, but ere he could grapple with him, he was effectually overpowered by numbers, and dragged to the floor.

"A spy! a rapparee! a deserter; pistol him—brain him—pink him," such were the ejaculations, accompanied by many an oath and imprecation, which rose and rang in ferocious confusion around the over-matched Jacobite, in this desperate but short-lived struggle. Torlogh O'Brien now lay gasping and overpowered upon the floor, a literal pile of men above him, hauling, throttling, tearing, and tugging at their now over-mastered and breathless victim.

"Hughes—Berry," said Garrett, hastily, "order patroles down the road, both ways, this moment. Let the trumpet sound—call in the men—tighten girths—and have all ready. There's something in this, by ——, more than we wot of. Secure the prisoner—bind him," he continued, addressing himself again to those who were engaged about Torlogh—"bind him, and never spare—bind him as you would a mad beast."

With such directions, Garrett stimulated his men, sooth to say, nothing loath themselves to extreme severity, in pinioning the prisoner's arms, and drawing the cords to their utmost tension; and thus, in a few seconds more, Torlogh O'Brien, bare-headed, his long hair matted and tangled in the struggle, his hands and his face smeared with blood—pale and faint from exhaustion—stood once more, pinioned and securely guarded by two soldiers, before his now entirely triumphant enemy.

CHAPTER LI.

THE RIDE BY MOONLIGHT.

"Well, sir, methinks you have at last got yourself fairly into pound; and egad you will scarce get out Scot free," exclaimed Garrett, as he seated himself opposite to his prisoner, and eyed him with a smile and a scowl, grim enough to behold. "You don't care, I presume, to give any information—dogged, of course; corporal, search him."

To attempt resistance under the circumstances would have been as undignified as futile. Torlogh, therefore, submitted in sullen silence.

"Ha! his commission," said Garrett, glancing at the parchment document, as he placed it in his pocket. "And what's this?—a letter," he continued, roughly opening the next paper handed to him.

"Do not read that—I charge you as you would be held a gentleman—read it not," interrupted Torlogh, indignantly.

With provoking coolness, Garrett proceeded to read it, nevertheless; and, as he did so, bit his lip, and turned deadly pale—then, tearing it slowly into strips and across and across, he flung it back into the grate, with a sneer, observing—

"You're not like to read such amorous memorials long, I promise you, master pedlar, though, sooth to say, it were a pity to spoil so promising a romance—but spies are spies, though never so deep in love, and must to the gallows as often as they are caught. Corporal," he continued, "look out a stout piece of rope in the stables there. We'll swing the traitor from one of the old orchard boughs—would every branch bore fruit as good. Meanwhile march him into one of the buildings, where he may say his prayers, and commend himself to his mistress, before all's over. Away with him—march."

The concluding order was spoken in a loud and peremptory tone, for he obviously did not care to hear his victim speak—and saw, or thought he saw, a disposition on his part to do so. Avoiding his very glance, Garrett turned abruptly on his heel, and strode to the window, through which he continued to look, whistling in affected carelessness, until the prisoner and his guard had passed forth.

He then became silent, glanced quickly through the room in dark abstraction, and again looked forth in gloomy silence.

"Cangley," said he, addressing an officer, "I and Mr. Strong (here he glanced at the chaplain), will return this evening to head-quarters; you take the command of the detachment in my absence—have your men at Ballinasloe by noon to-morrow—there you will at least hear of our position, and join the regiment forthwith; keep a sharp look out all night—do you mind—and hang and shoot any of the rapparees you may chance to light upon; don't let the dogs escape. Parson, come hither," he added, addressing the chaplain, and leading that perplexed official forth. They walked, arm in arm, in the little enclosure, to and fro, in earnest conference.

"Promise him, then," said Garrett, in conclusion, "that you will contrive his escape, or procure his pardon; say anything, in short, so that you lead him to tell you all about that old woman's papers and jewels; first, *is* Lady Willoughby actually dead—and then, what has become of her valuable jewels, and all the rest. I have a claim for some six or eight years' maintenance upon them—I can't afford to be swindled out of this."

"I'll see what may be *honestly* done," he replied; "I'll do all I fairly may."

"Here you, sir," said Garrett, striking one of the soldiers with the cane he carried, as he might an ill-favoured dog; "here you, sir—you, Martley—go in yonder to the prisoner—tell him from me to collect his wits, and prepare for an interview, and see that the cord is well secured about his arms—be quick, sirrah," he added, menacing him with a repetition of the blow; "and make no blunders—or by the mass, you shall walk the gauntlet, as you did before."

In surly silence the fellow obeyed; and it was not till he had reached the door of the stable where the prisoner was confined, that he muttered bitterly—

"Walk the gauntlet again—I believe you would flay me alive, if you dare. Well, I'll put a spoke in your wheel for all that—I will—and now's the time."

The dusk had now closed, and the rude chamber which he entered was so dark, that for a moment he could not discern its inmate. In gloomy despair, exhausted by vehement but fruitless efforts to free his hands, he was now sitting sullenly by the wall. The soldier came close up to him without speaking. He then said in a low but distinct tone—

"See, comrade—whoever you be—Captain Garrett means to pay you a visit—he'll be in this minute, to wheedle something out of you; but never mind: will you fight him and finish him, if you can, provided I loose your arms, and give you this knife?"

"I'll fight for my life—I'll fight while I've a drop of blood; give me this chance," said Torlogh, fiercely.

"You must wait here for him; and never say, if it fails, how you came by the knife," he pursued; "do you swear this?"

"I swear—as a soldier and a gentleman, I pledge my honour," said Torlogh, earnestly.

"Then, here goes," said the fellow, sullenly, as he ripped open the strained cordage; "now use your hands, when he comes—and use this to a purpose," he added, in a whisper, and placed the sharp knife, whose blade was full six inches long, in his grasp.

This done and said, he vanished—the door was secured outside—and all passed so rapidly, that but for the evidences in which he could not be deceived, he would have almost thought it a dream.

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed, which, to the prisoner, seemed to embrace whole hours of suspense, without the appearance of the expected visitant. At length, however, the chaplain entered. Torlogh O'Brien had placed himself in the shadow of the door, and recognized the intruder at a glance. Cautiously the lank gentleman in the mantle and cassock advanced, and our hero's first impulse was to avail himself of the open door, and relying upon his own strength and activity, to venture all upon one bold effort; the hazard of attempting to brave his way, single-handed, through an enclosure filled with troopers, was well nigh desperate; and in the momentary hesitation, another, and as it seemed a more hopeful scheme, flashed upon his mind. Upon this latter he resolved to stake all—and with caution and rapidity, he proceeded thus to its execution:—

With tread as noiseless as that of a cat, he lightly followed the stooped and groping figure, which was moving before him toward the dark extremity of the chamber. Had his own urgent and awful danger admitted an emotion of mirth, he might well have smiled at the ludicrous attitudes of the long-legged pastor—who, sweeping his lank arms slowly before him, groped and stumbled cautiously onward, in a stooping posture, ejaculating, as he proceeded—

"Prisoner—I say, prisoner, bestir thyself; prisoner, where's thy tongue, man?—I'll not harm thee."

If his ungainly attitudes and strange intonations were calculated to make our hero smile, what followed, had not his own life hung upon the issue, might well have made him laugh outright.

Collecting his whole strength, and watching his opportunity well—for the formidable proportions of his antagonist were not to be despised—Torlogh O'Brien waited until the cowering figure turned, in its bewildered search, towards himself; and then, with a single spring, clutching him by the throat, he hurled him backward, and with his whole weight, pinned him to the pavement. The violence of his fall—the utter unexpectedness of the assault—and a thousand confused apprehensions, prevented his attempting, for some seconds, to move, or even to speak: of these moments, Torlogh promptly availed himself:—

"I am armed—speak not—make no sound—and I swear you shall have no hurt; but if you attempt to stir, or give the alarm, by —— you shall die; I'm armed—once more, beware. Listen to my proposal," he continued, his hand still griped upon the throat of the prostrate man, with a pressure which just allowed him space to breathe; "listen—and submit with prudence."

* * * * * * * *

Meanwhile a sentinel with loaded musket, paced and repaced the space before the stable-door—dragoons smoked and loitered in the yard—two guards kept the outer gate, and Miles Garrett sate mounted upon his steed, while the brave Roland, never more, as it seemed, to bear his true master to the field, stood saddled beside him; an escort of four dragoons, moreover, stood by their horses, awaiting the order to mount, and close by the cavalcade a rope was swinging from a strong bough, and underneath a cart was placed. Upon these ominous preparations, Garrett looked from time to time with a kind of fascination—it was not pleasure, nor yet fear—a strange and horrible attraction, from which he seemed himself impatient to escape, for he looked often at his watch, and then through the gateway into the yard; at length muttering something which might have been either a curse, or a congratulation, between his teeth, he beheld the chaplain stalk slowly and gloomily forth; the impatient steed neighed shrilly, as his rider approached. The stalworth chaplain gloomily mounted; he seemed, in truth, sorely crest-fallen and depressed. The escort also mounted, and this little military cavalcade began to move at a brisk pace along the narrow and shaded road. They had ridden some way ere Garrett spoke.

"Well," he said, abruptly, "what did the scoundrel tell you?"

The dragoons were riding at a sharp trot, the pace which they had all kept hitherto, in advance of them, and the chaplain drew bridle as if about to make a disclosure more at his ease; he pointed, however, silently down a narrow lane, at the foot of which under a long perspective of stooping bushes, the waters of the glorious Shannon were glittering in the moonbeams.

"Well—what of it?" demanded Garrett, surlily, "you don't want to ford the water—do you?"

"Aye, but I do though," answered he of the cassock, sternly; "look at me, and know me."

Miles Garrett looked, and aghast beheld Torlogh O'Brien himself; he had dropped the heavy cloak from his shoulders, to disembarrass his movements, and the stern, statue-like features, and fiery eyes, looked full upon the almost cowering villain.

"Miscreant," he said, in a tone of intense and deadly calmness, "well may you despair—conscience tells you you deserve to die—here—this moment—by my hand—'twere but to touch this trigger, and all your villainies are ended; but, *murderer* as you are, *I* will not at advantage take your life, unless you force me to it; nay, advance not your hand to the holster; turn not, move not, except as I direct, or by heaven you die upon the spot, even were you innocent, as you are in reality blasted with every crime. Now, sir, we understand each other; I charge you on your life, restore me my commission; nay, no dallying—so there now, sir, follow your troopers at what pace you please."

Garrett hesitated for a moment, eyed his companion with a look of hideous rage, and perhaps was for a moment upon the point of risking all upon one desperate struggle; he wheeled about, however, and furiously dashing the spurs into his steed, was scarcely a pistol-shot away, when he shouted the alarm at the top of his voice.

"Now for it—now, my good Roland, thy master's life is in thy keeping—true mettled—fleet of limb—away—away!"

As he spoke, he gave him rein, and spring after spring away they went. Soaring like the wind down the steep road—behind them thunders the clatter of pursuit, and the hoarse shouting of the chace lends wings to their headlong speed, and now he plunges into the ford, high sheets the water round him in glittering spray, and down the steep road he has but just descended, his enemies come spurring and shouting like a demon chace, down to the water's brink they rattle.

Some plunge in, and follow; others spring from their horses and unsling their pieces—see how he plunges through the water close to the opposing bank—two shots, in quick succession—ha! is he down? no it was but a stumble; see, he shouts and waives his hat in defiance—now up the steep bank he plunges and scrambles—another shot—by the mass it has spun his hat off—he turns in the saddle as he clears the brow, and waives his hand with an exulting cheer, and in a moment more the rising bank has interposed, he gains upon them every second.

For a mile or more at reckless speed the chase was maintained. The interval, however, was obviously increasing between the pursued and the pursuers, and Garrett, in rage and despair, reins in his horse at last Hoarse with curses and threats, he railed and stormed at his men, and at the fugitive in turn.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CAMP AND THE FIELD OF AGHRIM.

AFTER little more than an hour's brisk riding, Torlogh O'Brien found himself traversing the straight and narrow paved road, which in those days formed the immediate approach of the ancient town of Aghrim. The misty moonlight covered the whole landscape; to the left rose the softened outline of the hill of Kilcomedan—a gentle eminence of a mile or so in length, with the little town of Aghrim snugly nestled at its foot, and the white canvas of the Irish camp studding its crest from end to end. Hundreds of ruddy fires were glowing, and around them were visible the gliding forms of soldiery and peasants; a hum and murmur like that of a crowded city, filled the night air. The lowing of cattle, penned for slaughter in the ruined castle which flanked the road, close to its entrance into the town, the distant neighing of horses, and the sullen roll of drums, enhanced, by a thousand martial and thrilling associations, the excitement which made his heart beat thick and fast, as he drew near the destined field of battle.

He soon fell in with the Irish pickets, and having stated his rank, and proved it by producing his commission, was, at his own request, conducted directly to Lord Lucan's tent. Passing, therefore, through the then excited little town, with its stout, heavy-chimnied, thatched houses, ringing with laughter, and singing, and all kinds of merriment, he pursued, with his escort, the steep road which mounts the crest of the sweeping hill, and entering the entrenched camp, found himself in a few minutes in Sarsfield's tent. His welcome was frank and cordial.

"You have a keen relish, colonel, for danger," said he, briskly; "you have just arrived in time—to-morrow we expect hot work enough, and to spare; but it is needful you should see the precious commander-in-chief they have sent us from Paris, before you assume the command of your regiment; so let us to his tent at once, as much is to be done, and little time to do it in."

"Had I not better first see O'Mara, and get at my trunk mails," said Torlogh, glancing at his unmilitary attire, "these French generals, they say, are punctilious in matters of the toilet."

"Pshaw! what care you or I for the coxcomb's fancies," said Sarsfield gruffly, at the same time planting his cocked hat carelessly on, and taking Torlogh by the arm; "we don't want *petit maitres*, but men of head and action, and the oftener we let him see it, the better he's like to behave himself; besides, *I* command the cavalry, and I stand between you and the fellow's annoyance; if he don't like your dress, we can't help it—there's matter more important for to-night, than triming of ruffles and unpapering of gold lace."

As he thus spoke, he led O'Brien through a portion of the camp, until they reached, near the very summit of the hill, one of these ancient raths which abound in Ireland ; this was an unusually large one, with a high embankment hedged with wild bushes and brambles surrounding it ; and in the centre of the enclosed area stood the tent of the Marquis de St. Ruth. Passing the sentinels who guarded the levelled way into the fort, and who saluted Lord Lucan, that officer led his companion to the general's tent.

"Lord Lucan," said Sarsfield, curtly announcing himself to the starch old military servant who came to the tent door.

"Pray come in, my lord," answered the grizzled veteran, with a low inclination, and employing the French language, in which the subsequent conversation was also conducted.

General St. Ruth was sitting writing at a table under a strong light. He was a well-built, handsome man, of some fifty years ; sharp and masculine of feature ; dark complexioned ; and with a countenance decidedly bold and energetic ; though marred a little in expression by a certain superciliousness, not to say disdain, which had, perhaps, helped to provoke the positive dislike with which Lord Lucan regarded him.

Without raising his head, the French general continued to write in apparent unconsciousness of the presence of his visiters. If this unconsciousness was assumed, it was certainly well acted. Sarsfield, however, abruptly terminated it by intimating his presence in a sharp and peremptory tone.

General St. Ruth rose and recieved Lord Lucan with a formal and distant salutation, and remained standing, it is to be presumed, to avoid the necessity of asking his visiter to be seated.

"Some business, I presume, my lord?" he said, drily enough.

Sarsfield replied by presenting Torlogh O'Brien, and to him St. Ruth spoke for several minutes with easy courtesy, never addressing one word to his companion, who, much nettled at the foreigner's studied coolness, constrained his resentment so far as to affect indifference.

"Adieu, colonel," said St. Ruth at last, still confining his attention to O'Brien, "we much needed cavalry officers, such as I already judge you to be—gentlemen who understand and do their own business, without interfering in that of others."

"By my faith," interposed Sarsfield, unceremoniously, and almost savagely—for he knew that the last remark had been pointed at himself; "there is, indeed, a sore lack of men who understand their business here—a dearth by no means mendedby any late arrivals we can boast. It was conspicuously proved at Athlone, and I trust may not be so again to-morrow."

"If you have no further business with me, my lord," said the general, tartly, "may I pray you—as ceremony seems to be dispensed with here—to direct your care, for an hour or so, to your men and horses—and leave me to arrange the business of to-morrow. Your orders shall be with you by two o'clock to-night. Adieu."

"Marquis of St. Ruth," retorted Sarsfield, bluntly, while the blood mounted to his face; "I seek not to be consulted by you—though, perchance, wiser men have asked and followed my advice. Of thus much, however, be assured—but that the king's service demands forbearance, spite of your command and your commission, I would, on the spot, teach you to respect an Irish gentleman."

St. Ruth changed colour, and made a menacing movement of his hand toward his sword-hilt; he mastered the impulse, however—and with a shrug, and an ominous smile, he said, briefly—

"You can explain this language hereafter and elsewhere, my lord."

He then bowed very low, pointing at the same time toward the door. Thus ended O'Brien's introduction—and thus concluded a conference, which had well nigh ended in bloodshed.

"Ah, my good friend, honest Cailliard," exclaimed St. Ruth, with a profound and anxious sigh, as he threw himself into his chair; "woe worth the day that ever I accepted this command." For some seconds he remained silent and abstracted. "What say you, Cailliard—a bad affair?" he abruptly added, glancing at the trim old soldier.

"My good lord," answered he, kindly and respectfully, "I have often heard you say as much, when we were serving in Savoy. It is, after all, but fatigue; half an hour's sleep, or a cup of coffee, and all is bright again."

St. Ruth smiled, but shook his head, and then almost sadly added—

"No, no, Cailliard—this is a very different business; this appointment has made me enemies at home—powerful enemies; and *here*, you see how it is. Louvois is my enemy—this Irish command has made him so," he continued, in gloomy abstraction: "Louvois—Louvois, a dangerous, dangerous gentleman—specially dangerous in absence; and this Lord Lucan, and his Lutterels, factious, insubordinate truly—among them all, I hold my honours on a fragile tenure; by my faith, a miscarriage here were a grave matter for me—ruin, ruin, nothing short of ruin."

He relapsed into silence, and resumed his writing, which occupied him for nearly half an hour longer.

"Eh bien! my friend—so far it is well done," said he, briskly, rising and throwing the pen upon the table; "orders and despatches—all done, and the plan complete; to-morrow's battle here—all here," and he touched his forehead. "So, by my faith, I've earned my biscuit and my glass of wine, for this night at least, methinks: what say you, my trusty Cailliard? Come, bring the flask—and bring a glass, too, for yourself," he added, gaily and kindly; "drink, drink to your master's success—drink to his Irish laurels; for, by Saint Denis, I'm resolved to gather them, though it be but to plant them on my grave."

* * * * * * * *

The memorable 12th of July, 1691, rose over the destined field of battle, in one of those heavy fogs which portend unusual heat. Before seven o'clock, scouts came spurring in with the exciting intelligence, that the whole English force was rapidly crossing the River Suck, at Ballinasloe, and the fords adjacent, just three miles distant from the field of Aghrim. At eight o'clock, the columns of Irish infantry were formed all along the front of the camp; and with colours displayed, and drums beating, began to march down the slope of the hill, and get into position. The cavalry destined for the outposts moved forward—and the artillery, with all its lumbering appliances, advanced to occupy the several batteries whence its fire was to play upon the assailing army.

A few words must here be said in explanation of the Irish position. The hill of Kilcomedan is in no part very steep—it forms a gradual slope, extending almost due north and south, from end to end, a distance of about a mile and a half; and at the time of which we speak, it was perfectly open and covered with heath. Along the crest of this hill was pitched the Irish camp; and the position in which St. Ruth was resolved to await the enemy, extended along its base.

The foremost line of the Irish, composed entirely of musketeers, occupied a series of small enclosures, and was covered in front throughout its entire extent by a morass, throughout which flows a little stream; and this swamp, with difficulty passable by infantry, was wholly so for cavalry. Through two passes only was the Irish position, thus covered, assailable upon firm ground, the one at the extreme right, much the more open of the two, and called the pass of Urrachree, from an old house and demesne which lay close to it; and the other, at the extreme left, by the long, straight road leading into the town of Aghrim. This road was broken, and so narrow that some annalists state that two horses could not pass it abreast; in addition to which it was commanded by the Castle of Aghrim, then as now, it is true, but a ruin, but whose walls and enclosures nevertheless afforded effectual cover, and a position such as ought to have rendered the pass impregnable. Beyond these passes, at either side, were extensive bogs; and dividing them, the interposing morass. The enclosures in which the advanced musketeers were posted afforded excellent cover, and from one to the other communications had been cut, and at certain intervals their whole length was also traversed by broad passages intended to admit the flanking charge of the Irish cavalry, in case the enemy's infantry should succeed in forcing their way thus far. The main line extended in a double row of columns, parallel to the advanced position of the musketeers, and the reserve of the cavalry was drawn up upon a small plain, a little behind the Castle of Aghrim, which was occupied by a force of about two thousand men. The Irish army numbered in all perhaps about twenty thousand men, and the position which they held extended more than an English mile, and was indeed as powerful a one as could possibly have been selected.

Many of our readers are no doubt aware, that the field of Aghrim was fought upon a Sunday, a circumstance which added one to the many thrilling incidents of the martial scene. The army had hardly moved into the position which was that day to be so sternly and devotedly maintained, when the solemn service of high mass was commenced at the head of every regiment by its respective chaplain; and during this solemn ceremonial, at every moment were arriving fresh messengers from the outposts, their horses covered with dust and foam, with the stern intelligence that the enemy were steadily approaching; and amid all this excitement and suspense, in silence and bare-headed, kneeled the devoted thousands, in the ranks in which they were to receive the foe, and on the very ground for which they were, in a few hours, so desperately to contend. This solemn and striking ceremonial, under circumstances which even the bravest admit to be full of awe, and amid the tramp and neighing of horses, and the jingling of accoutrements, and the distant trumpet signals from the outposts, invested the scene with a wildness and sublimity of grandeur which blanched many a cheek, and fluttered many a heart with feelings very different from those of fear.

And now from the extreme left, resting upon the Castle of Aghrim, high mass being ended, arose a wild shouting—the deep, stern acclamation of thousands of human voices swelling over the heathy sweep of Kilcomedan, and wildly pealing onward, and gathering as it came; while foremost among a brilliant staff, with his chief officers about him, dressed in a uniform which actually blazed with gold, and with a snow white plume (which tradition still records tossing in the three-cocked hat, which he raised as he greeted each regiment in succession), rode the man who carried in his head alone the plan of that day's battle—the Marquis de St. Ruth. A word or two he spoke at the head of every regiment, and though his language, which was French, was not of course understood, except by the officers, his stern and animated voice, the splendour of his appearance, and the emphatic gesture with which he pointed with his plumed hat in the direction in which the enemy, shrouded in the intervening mist, were known to be advancing, these were appeals sufficient for hearts charged with the wild and stern excitement of impending battle. At every brief, stern sentence, from the Irish ranks, in the irrepressible enthusiasm of that grand and terrible hour, broke rapturous gratulations and responses, in the wild and passionate Celtic dialect, which swelled and gathered as he passed on, in one long cheer of high and pealing menace, far more thrilling and glorious than all the clangour of the martial music that rose along the line.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE BATTLE.

Deeper and more exciting every moment grew the suspense--all the outposts from the opposite hills, only a mile distant, had been driven in, and upon their misty outlines every eye was turned to discern, if possible, the columns of the enemy, whose presence was already indicated by the sharp roll of drums, and the other signals which accompany military movements. At length, however, at twelve o'clock, under the blaze of the noon-day sun, the interposing mist rolled slowly away like a solemn curtain, and disclosed to each army the stern military spectacle which confronted it.

"Jesu guard us!" said O'Gara, addressing Torlogh O'Brien, who, at the head of his regiment, occupied the right of the line at the pass of Urrachree, "it is a powerful army. I fear me we are much outnumbered;" and his dilated eye wandered over the low undulating hills which confronted him, upon which were slowly moving the compacted masses of the enemy.

"These are Cunningham's dragoons, methinks," said Torlogh O'Brien, lowering the glass through which he had been scrutinizing the foremost regiment of the immensely preponderating force which threatened the pass of Urrachree. "We shall have a brush with them presently. See there to the left: they are getting their great guns into battery. Yonder are the Danes, and look there the Huguenot foot; there again are the white Dutch, and there the blue."

As Torlogh O'Brien thus pointed out, in detail, as far as he distinctly could, the various regiments which formed the opposing army, the sight over which the eye of the young priest wandered was, in truth, a stern and splendid one. There were masses of cavalry, some in buff jerkins, others in steel breast-plates—wide seas of tossing plumes and manes—

huge columns of pikemen, reflecting from their burnished head-pieces, cuirasses, and grives the blaze of the meridian sun; there were the musketeers too, in their bright cloth uniforms, varying according to the national equipment of every country in that wondrous confluence of nations assembled there; and every regiment, headed by its colonel, trailing in his own right hand a veritable pike, according to the then military usage, as, stiff with gold lace, with flowing periwig, and lawn neckcloth, he marched in the van of his men.

"See," added Torlogh, abruptly, "an aid-de-camp from Ginkle's staff is now speaking with the commander of Cunningham's regiment; take my advice, Mr. O'Gara, and ride back towards the camp; for, unless I'm mistaken, the action will begin presently."

He had hardly said thus much, when a single troop of dragoons filed off from the regiment, to which their attention was directed, and began to trot down the opposite slope, into the plain which interposed between the two armies, followed by the main body at a walk; and now, indeed, many a heart beat thick, and all was hushed and silent as the grave!—for the threatened attack upon the pass of Urrachree was actually about to open, and with it the momentous battle on which the destinies of the kingdom were suspended. At the same moment the Irish battery commanding the pass of Urrachree opened its fire upon the advancing troops; and the opposing hills pealed back the successive explosions; while the British detachment from a trot broke into a charge, and with cuirasses and swords flashing through the clouds of dust that rose around them from the parched soil, came thundering down upon the outposts which guarded the entrance to the pass.

"I pray you, ride a little back," said Torlogh, addressing the priest a second time, as the smoke of the cannon, driving slowly over the light breeze, darkened their faces in its shadow. "The battle has commenced. My men may be engaged ere many minutes more."

Reluctantly, the priest obeyed; and just as he did so, St. Ruth and his staff galloped up to the spot. Every glass was now raised to watch the issue.

"Right, right!—well done!" exclaimed St. Ruth, in his native tongue, as he watched intently the movements of the opposing parties: "our men give ground, as I directed. Good!—the English cross the rivulet!—and now the whole regiment are about to follow! Colonel O'Brien," he continued, addressing that officer, who was instantly at his side, "as soon as they are all across, charge them in flank."

Torlogh bowed, and rode back to the head of his regiment; and in a few seconds more, the splendid cavalry he commanded were following him at a gallop down the slope. The intervening distance was cleared in less than a minute, and with a wild cheer the splendid corps dashed into the English cavalry, ere they had well time to form, and bore them back in utter confusion, pursuing them beyond the stream they had already crossed, hurling men and horses over in the tremendous rush, and sabring the riders in spite of their cuirasses and steel-cased hats. When the dust cleared off, it disclosed O'Brien's regiment halted in line, beyond the stream, and the English cavalry retiring in confusion; on the ground lay strewn many a steed and rider, and many a horse, with empty saddle, scampered wildly over the plain.

"By my faith, a beautiful charge!" said St. Ruth, in irrepressible exultation. "These Irish will immortalize themselves to day. We must take some care of the brave fellows, however. Desire my Lord Galway to move his horse a little forward," he added, addressing one of his aides-de-camp; and then to another he said—"Tell O'Brien to draw his men again behind the brook."

The officers spurred off upon their respective missions, and the orders were duly attended to. These movements were followed by repeated skirmishes between the Irish and English cavalry at the same flank, but with a like result; and after two hours' conflict, the latter had not made an inch of ground. Meanwhile, the remainder of the British force was halted much in the position they had occupied when the attack upon the pass of Urrachree was commenced; and the cavalry which had been engaged was now withdrawn. An anxious interval followed; and up to five o'clock, it was undecided whether the attack should be renewed or not: at that hour, however, the enemy were once more put in motion—and now, indeed, it became evident that a general action was about to commence. The Danish cavalry moved forward upon the same point, and under cover of their advance—the Danish and Huguenot infantry marched up to the enclosures occupied by the Irish musketeers, and commenced the attack in earnest, upon the extreme right. Now rose the roar of musketry, sharp and sustained—and hedges, fields, and plain, were speedily shrouded in one white mass of smoke, through which were seen the dense columns of the assailants, and the rapid and ceaseless blazing of the guns.

Other columns of English infantry, marching along the edge of the morass, in front of the line, soon began to move upon various points of the Irish centre, across the intervening swamp; and thus, in little more than an hour, the whole line, with the exception of the extreme left, at the pass of Aghrim, was hotly engaged. The English artillery, planted at the verge of the morass, played upon the Irish centre, and was answered from the Irish batteries; while, throughout the whole length of the line, in one continuous roar, the musketry poured on, enveloping all beyond it in impenetrable cloud. The Irish, in accordance with the order of their general, retired in perfect order, from one inclosure to another, wherever they were pressed, and thus drew the impetuous assailants onward. The Huguenots, upon the right, were thus surrounded, and at last forced to give ground under tremendous slaughter. Precisely a similar manœuvre was practised with a like success upon the centre—three times were the enemy driven headlong through the morass, which they had crossed, and forced, with dreadful loss, back to the very muzzles of their cannon. The Irish line, throughout its entire extent, was unshaken—its centre was victorious, and its left untouched. The evening was already far spent, and the issue of the struggle, whatever it might be, could not now be remote. St. Ruth, seeing the British centre thus repeatedly beaten back, could not restrain his exultation and rapture at the heroism of the Irish infantry, of whom before he had thought so meanly, when he beheld them, for the third time, drive their assailants pellmell through the bog, and pursue them to their very batteries. Tradition says he threw his hat up into the air, and cried, "Now, then, I will beat them back to the gates of Dublin."

Meanwhile the right wing of the English, consisting of several regiments of their best cavalry and infantry, together with a party of artillery, began to advance along the narrow road to Aghrim; this approach, as we have already said, was greatly the most difficult, and was, moreover, entirely commanded by the castle and its enclosures, in which were posted nearly two thousand men; it was, moreover, swept by one of the Irish batteries, and was so very narrow, that two men could with difficulty, if at all, ride abreast along it; no wonder then if St. Ruth considered this pass altogether impracticable.

This force marched down the long and narrow causeway, which we have described as forming the only pass by which the left of the Irish line was approachable upon solid ground; and having reached a point some three or four hundred yards in advance of the castle of Aghrim (whose ruined walls and ditches closely overlooked the road), they began rapidly to form into column, upon a small esplanade of firm soil, which there expanded to an extent of some few acres. The artillery unyoked their guns, and the infantry, quitting the road, began to march, or rather to wade and scramble through the swamp, keeping their ranks, as best they might, under a continued fire from the Irish batteries; at the same time the English cavalry began to file along the road toward the castle, and their cannon, over the heads of the advancing columns, returned the pealing fire of the Irish guns.

St. Ruth rode a little up the hill of Kilcomedan, whence he might command a view of the entire field. From end to end, like one continued roar of thunder, pealed the musketry; and the unbroken cloud of white smoke spread entirely across the plain, and swept round the bases of the opposing hills. The glorious evening sun streamed redly over the scene of havoc—blazing on the extended splendour of martial pomp—and all along the line rose, deep and stern, the wild shouting of tens of thousands of human voices—while, from the opposing batteries rang out the sustained discharge of artillery, and the roar of round shot—speeding through dust and smoke, upon their deadly mission.

Nobly, upon every point, were the Irish infantry sustaining the assault; the English centre was absolutely beaten, and thrown into confusion; the pass of Urrachree was maintained with invincible resolution; the infantry who had crossed near Aghrim were driven, under the tremendous fire of their opponents, back again, with fearful loss, to the verge of the bog; and the cavalry were moving slowly along the broken road, in files, and approaching the castle—occupied, as we have said, by nearly two thousand infantry—under whose shot it seemed impossible that a single horseman of the whole force thus fearfully exposed, could escape destruction.

Almost at a glance, the practised eye of the general took in all that we have described.

"What do they mean, there?" said he to Lord Galmoy, who stood next him, and pointing with his glass to the English cavalry.

"They mean to force the pass," replied he.

"Then *we* have won the field," said St. Ruth; "but they are brave fellows; it is a pity they should be so exposed. Order two foot regiments," he added, promptly, "from the left rear, to move toward Urrachree, at quick time;" the aide-de-camp dashed away down the slope with the orders; "and the reserved cavalry to mount, and two regiments to move hither," he continued, addressing a second messenger, who sped away upon the errand; while springing from his jaded and foam-streaked horse, St. Ruth himself mounted the grey charger which the groom held for him close by the battery; the third steed, and the last, as tradition says, which he bestrode that day—and then, in a few brief words, he issued his final orders to the gunner for the direction of his fire.

Now, indeed, the fate of the day seemed well-nigh settled, and many an Irish soldier grasped the hand of his comrade in the enthusiasm of anticipated victory, as they watched the heroic exploits of their resolute brethren in the van.

Fortune, however, on a sudden declared for the English. A fatal blunder was too late discovered. The regiment who occupied the castle and its enclosures, whose fire must have exterminated the cavalry, in their difficult, nay desperate advance, found cannon ball, instead of bullets, in the casks with which they were supplied. Messenger after messenger was despatched in furious haste, to repair this ruinous error—but in vain. The enemy's cavalry was now advancing almost under the walls of the Castle. Pebbles, buttons—every thing that the moment could supply—was in requisition; but shotted with such missiles, their fire was ineffectual. Under this shower of gravel, and ramrods, and buttons, the cavalry, but partially disturbed, pressed onward, passed the castle, and formed upon the left flank of the Irish infantry. At the same moment, by a misapprehension of St. Ruth's orders, two columns from the front, instead of the rear, of the Irish line of infantry, began to march—from the flank now most severely pressed—towards Urrachree. The English infantry, seeing their support thus withdrawn from the musketeers who had hitherto effectually held them in check, now boldly recrossed the bog; and a cry of treachery began to spread along the Irish line. The cavalry whom St. Ruth had ordered in advance were, however, now formed upon the hill-side. The general, confident of their resolution, and having seen their prowess proved already, in full assurance of sweeping the English horse, with ease, from their present lodgment, rode to the head of the magnificent column who awaited his orders. "They are beaten," said he, with stern exultation, "let us beat them to the purpose." Everything depended on the promptitude of the movement; and at this critical moment, when the fortunes of kings and kingdoms hung trembling in the scale, a round shot from one of the English batteries shattered the head of St. Ruth to atoms. The white plumed hat rolled down the hill before the breeze. Wildly plunged the maddened charger. The lifeless body swayed for a minute in the deep saddle, with all its resplendent trappings, and tumbled to the ground. The cavalry halted; some of the French guard dismounted, and threw a cloak over the headless trunk, which was thus carried to the rear. The guard themselves followed; and now a general panic began to spread throughout the Irish army. The cavalry, thus left without orders or general, fell back in uncertainty. The infantry, first at the left flank, then at the centre, and finally at the right began to give ground, at first slowly, and soon in confusion, running pell-mell toward the camp. The Irish cavalry, abandoned by the foot, retreated by the road to Loughrea; and in one huge mob, the now routed infantry ran toward the bog which extended in the rear. Among this broken and wide-spread mass the infuriated English cavalry plunged and hewed, and trampled with merciless slaughter—a giddy, frightful scene of rage and terror, confusion, and butchery, on every side. Instead of the stern huzzas which had filled the air not half an hour before, now rose, wild and appalling, one fearful chorus of wailing, terror, and despair.

"We killed," says Story, "seven thousand of the Irish upon the spot, as was generally believed, and there could not be many fewer, for looking among the dead three days after, when all our own, and some of theirs were buried, I reckoned in some small enclosures one hundred-and-fifty, in others one hundred-and-twenty, &c., lying, most of them by the ditches where they were shot; and the rest, from the top of the hill where their camp had been, looked like a great flock of sheep scattered up and down the country, for almost four miles round."

Thus ended the last battle, in which the Irish nation rallied the fragments of its ancient aristocracy and native people, in military array against the power of England.

In the choir of St. Patrick's cathedral are suspended what are alleged to be the gloves and spurs of St. Ruth; nay, even the shot that slew him in its flight. His ashes lie, as tradition asserts with clear and circumstantial detail, in the roofless church of Athenry, beside those of Lord Galway, who fell upon the self-same field of battle.

To this hour, by many a peasant hearth, tradition tells her tales of that memorable day—the rustic labourer from time to time turns up the whitened bones of those who fought and fell so bravely upon the tranquil and deserted fields, where once the fate of Ireland was determined; and many a rusted spur and pike-head still is found just where the chances of the battle had flung it so many years ago.

CHAPTER LIV.

OF GLINDARRAGH CASTLE AND ALL WHO MET THERE

THE events which follow are matter of history.—The siege and treaty of Limerick—the death of the Duke of Tyrconnel—and the "flight of the Wild Geese," as tradition still calls the departure of the Irish regiments for the shores of France, to fill, as they afterwards did, all Europe with the renown of the Irish Brigade—on these events we need not dwell. But one intervening occurrence of a private kind, and of small interest, indeed, to the reader, though of some importance to our tale, it is here necessary to record; this is the death of old Sir Thomas Neville—now past a full month or more—and to which, as an explanatory fact, and as such only (without disrespect to his memory), allusion has now been made.

It was in the month of October, 1691, that the French ship in which Sarsfield was about to embark, floated, with her white canvas spread, on the bosom of the noble Shannon. Standing with one foot on the gunwale of the boat, which was about to row him to the vessel's side, Lord Lucan for the last time, wrung the hand of Torlogh O'Brien.

"Had you done otherwise," he said, in conclusion; "I should never have forgiven you; and what is more, neither would the King. You have redeemed your engagements to his majesty, well and nobly; honour imposes on you now another, and, I trust, a happier allegiance. May she to whom it is due, prove all that rumour says of her—I can wish you no greater happiness. Remember all I've said to you of friends and country; and so, farewell—farewell."

The boat skimmed the blue waves of the glorious river—a few minutes more, and the tall vessel floated down with wind and tide; the noble exile, as he stood upon the quarter-deck, waving his hat to the friends who watched his departure, under the shadow of that now deserted fortress—the ancient town of Limerick—which his energy and daring had so well defended.

Torlogh O'Brien having watched the departing vessel until the figures upon her deck grew dim and indistinct, mounted his charger, Roland, and was soon far upon his way to Glindarragh castle.

Upon the same day it was, that Sir Hugh's carriage, in which travelled himself and his daughter, Grace Willoughby, also approached, though by a different route, the castle of Glindarragh.

The last miles of a journey, especially when it is to end with home, are invariably the most irksome. The roads were broken, and the progress of the vehicle in which he sat so intolerably tedious, that the old knight's impatience could brook it at length no longer. He descended on foot, to cross the fields by a pathway which, traversing the now desolate farm of Drumgunniol, led pretty directly to the bridge of Glindarragh. As the old man strode firmly through the straggling bushes, and marked the blackened ruins of the farm-house—these striking memorials of the troublous times so lately past suggested irresistibly their corresponding associations of persons and of adventure—associations which haunted Sir Hugh until, as he walked through the shadowy ruins of the old abbey of Glindarragh, he involuntarily exclaimed—

"Unhappy wretch—ill-fated Tisdal! what chance, I wonder, has befallen him."

He was startlingly answered by a groan; and looking a little to the left, he saw, at a distance of but a few yards before him, seated upon a fragment of some dislodged and ruined tomb, the identical Tisdal, with whom his imagination even then was busy; his hair grown thin and gray, his lank hands supporting his stooping head, and his dress soiled and tattered—a spectacle, indeed, of wretchedness. Sir Hugh looked fixedly upon him, and perhaps something of pity softened the sternness of his regard. The man—who had, indeed, seen him as he approached—arose, and turning sullenly away, walked some paces slowly into the ruin. He stopped, however—hesitated—returned, and threw himself at his old patron's feet. Strange and various were the impulses which crossed the mind of old Sir Hugh, as he beheld this spectacle. His generous nature triumphed, however; and in a tone of deep sorrow he called on him to rise. It was long ere that call was answered.

A strange conversation ensued: it concluded thus—

"It seems, indeed, the wisest, if not the only course left for you," said Sir Hugh. "In the new world, with the ocean between you and the scenes of all your troubles and remorse, you will have security at least, if not happiness. Of your property here I will become the purchaser. Agree with my attorney in Dublin—you know him well—and for your present necessities take this."

Sir Hugh placed some gold in his hand as he spoke. The wretched man was unable to answer. At last he said—

"A wretch like me has no blessing to give; but—but your own heart will bless you for this."

He turned abruptly, as it seemed, unwilling to trust himself with another word, and walking hurriedly through the mouldering walls, was soon out of sight; but the old knight thought he heard him sobbing as he went.

Oh, how immeasurably happier was Sir Hugh, as he pursued his homeward path, than if he had turned sternly away from the prostrate though guilty suppliant!

* * * * * * *

The happiness of that day, no words of ours can paint. What blessings, what "welcomes back again," what tears of joy! Old Sir Hugh—simple and eager as a boy in his delight—attended by his favourite dogs—bounding and yelping round him in affectionate ecstacies, and by many a beaming face of humble friendship—re-visits his horses and his hawks, handles once more his trusty birding piece, again tries the spring and balance of his pet trout-rod, and, in short, like an emancipated schoolboy, let loose upon the yet untried delights of holiday time, hovers in rapturous uncertainty among the conflicting attractions of a hundred joyous and familiar sports. As thus he whiles whole hours away, which fly almost like minutes, Grace, once more with her old nurse, sits in her quaint, darksome chamber. Those who had not seen her since she went forth, full two years since, might mark some change, though not unpleasing, in the buoyant, impetuous girl who then departed—something subdued, more tender, though not sadder, in the rich nobleness of her beauty: her high and graceful carriage had more of settled dignity; her affections, too, not warmer, but more disciplined; yet was she still simple, true, generous as ever, only she had grown less a girl and more a woman.

'Well, well, a cushla," said the old woman, archly, as she held up her tremulous finger, and looked with a puckered smile into the blushing face and laughing eyes of her darling; "did not I say the old song was coming out; if it did not come true one way, it will another. There he stood on Glindarragh bridge, sure enough, an' the leaf of the shamarogue in the bone of his forehead—as who can deny that same, and the jewel on his arm; it's well I mind that night, for the jewel was yourself, mavourneen, that hung so beautiful round his arm, that frightful evening. The Lord be thanked that it's over, and gone for ever and ever; an' a bright, precious, glorious jewel you were an' are my colleen beg moe. An' under the old hall, sure enough, where the cider, an' the beer, an' the butter, an' all the rest, is stored away—for though they call it the store-loft now, the old hall it is—an' the hall you might hear the old people callin' it to this day—undher the hall, sure enough, he stabled his horse, an' into the castle he's comin' now for good; an' so the old song's come true, an' all's out but the endin' of it. Well, well, ye can finish that between ye; an' if the castle ever goes away from the O'Briens agin—for the want of an heir, at least—it's your own fault, you rogue, you, an' no one else's—mind my words; for there is not a handsomer or a cleverer gentleman in Ireland's grounds, than that same Colonel—that same Torlogh Duv O'Brien."

Ere the blushing and half-laughing girl could chide her old nurse, the clang of horses' hoofs were heard in the court-yard—

"He's coming, he's here," she cried; and starting up, she threw her arms about the old woman's neck, and kissed her again and again, and then ran, with a bounding heart and a glowing cheek, down to the stately parlour, with its dark wainscoting and its solemn files of ancestral portraits.

There, among these old family memorials, stood the breathing representative of that new alliance, which was to bury, in love's oblivion, all the feuds and discords of the past. Yes, Torlogh O'Brien—happy, thrice happy, in the true love of this devoted and beautiful girl, with tumultuous greeting folds her to his heart, and, with the privilege of the betrothed, kisses her burning cheek—nay, kisses her very lips. Oh! joyous meeting; oh! ecstacy unutterable; too wildly happy for tears—too deep for laughter; yet trembling and gushing with the mysterious confluence of both; what raptures of affection in every look; what boundless tenderness in the hushed tones of every word!

Leave we them to talk together, to look on one another—to talk and look, and look and talk again, in fullness of happiness, while hours untold fly by with giddy speed.

Alas! there is one for whom this welcome hour hath brought no joy; who sits lonely and sorrow-stricken in the midst of the general happiness. Near the deserted mill, upon the woody slope, in that quaint cottage, sheltered by tufted thorns and knotted oaks, and wooed and sung to by the wayward stream—sits in the lone casement a pale, faded, but still beautiful creature. Her wan cheek leans upon her little hand. Her deep, dark eye wanders from the waving bramble to the foaming stream, but vacantly, for images unseen by others fill its sad vision, and wet its lashes with glittering tears.

Alas! Poor little Phebe—lonely, lonely watcher—desolate and gentle creature—hoping ever on, in spite of sorrow, and cold neglect, and long delays. Alas! shall joy ever more light up thy pale face with smiles; shall the day ever come, indeed, when *he* shall fold thee to his heart again—when *his* voice shall murmur the charmed music of his boundless love into thy longing ear—when *his* lips shall kiss away thy tears, and bid thee grieve no more—or is the hope, the one hope on which thy very life has hung, after all but an illusion?

Hark! the unwonted clang of a horse's hoof disturbs the day-dream of the solitary mourner; and now a step upon the stair—a voice—oh! blessed sound!—oh, heaven—and can it be? Like a startled bird, toward that voice she flies, and, with one wild cry of joy, drops senseless into Percy Neville's arms.

"My wife—my darling—my adored—my own!—and do I see you?—and do I hold you fast, indeed—indeed, once more? Phebe, darling Phebe, speak to me!—look up!—it is I—Percy—your own Percy—who will never, never, while he lives, part from you more!"

Weeping—oh, how bitterly!—with very ecstasy of joy, her thin arms strained about his neck, sobbing and nestling in his bosom she lay.

"And could you, *could* you think your own Percy would ever, of his own choice, even for an hour leave you? Oh, could you think that all the world would tempt me to forsake you—dearest—my own—my idolized? Yes, darling, smile—smile through your tears; for we *are* met, indeed—never again—oh, never—while we live, to part!"

Oh, what rapture of affection! what greetings! what tears and blessings! what hopes for long and happy years to come!—hopes, unlike too many of their human kindred, destined to be realized. What confidences! what mingled tears and smiles!—what shall we say? Better to hold our peace, and leave these to the kindly reader's fancy.

* * * * * * *

Never in the Hall of Glindarragh was wedding feast half so joyous before. The old knight sat again at the head of his board, the very impersonation of gracious hospitality, and cordial welcome. Grace and Torlogh O'Brien, as beseems the bride and bridegoom, at his right, and at his left Percy Neville and his own sweet Phebe; and beyond them good friends and neighbours true, and tenants and dependants. What hilarity—what happiness—what blushing, and quizzing, and laughter, and toasting—what clattering of knives and forks—what a buzzing medley of many voices—what booming and squeaking of a full dozen of bagpipes, at least, straining in preparation for the coming dance, outside in the lobbies—what a jostling, and crossing, and confusion of servants! and not one sour or gloomy face to be seen among them all. Even Dick Goslin's sallow countenance glowed faintly in the reflected radiation of the general jollity and good humour, while Tim Dwyer, in good fellowship and agreeability, absolutely outdid himself; and, as he was after heard to remark, despaired of ever coming up to it again, or anything like it, to his dying day. But all this was nothing to Con Donovan—he was a sublimation of himself; his grandeur was never so grand before—his smiles never so luminous—his jokes were irresistible—the very twinkle of his eye bewitching; his portliness seemed to have expanded and rounded; the very whiteness of his hair was whiter, and the redness of his face more rubicund. He was Con Donovan intensified and exaggerated a hundred-fold, as he stood, absolutely radiating with a kind of glory around him, behind the chair of his indulgent and beloved old master. This is indeed delightful, when every face you look upon beams with the glow of cordial, kindly merriment—when the tides of sympathy, like springs unlocked in sudden thaws, gush genially and unrestrained; and all the clatter and rude uproar of jolly sound is harmonized by some soft under-current of pervading melody, as it were the sweet singing of so many hearts from very joy. Here, then, ere yet one coming cloud has thrown its shadow over the scene, drop we the curtain upon those actors, with whom we have grown familiar, and from whom the writer, at least, now parts for ever, with something like regret.

O'Gara continued to hold his place as almoner, after his regiment had been taken into the pay of France. He accompanied them through several of the continental campaigns, and finally retired into an humble monastery in the north of Italy—in whose library are, we believe, still to be seen, several volumes inscribed with his name. Thomas Talbot retired to the court of St. Germains, where he subsisted, nominally, upon his wretched pension, but in reality upon play, at which he was an adept—and which maintained him in those debauched and expensive courses to which he was addicted—until at last his vicious career was suddenly cut short, and he was found, early one morning, in a narrow lane, in an obscure part of Paris, lying stark and stiff, in a pool of blood—his body pierced with a hundred wounds, and his broken sword still griped in his cold hand, attesting the characteristic resolution with which he had contended for his life.

The fate of Miles Garrett was somewhat remarkable. When Ryan, familiarly known as Ned of the Hills, retired to the Slievephelim mountains, the centre of the ancient patrimony of the O'Moel Ryans (the sept whose representative he claimed to be), none of the bordering proprietary suffered at all so severely and so often from his predatory excursions, as did the renegade proprietor of Lisnamoe. Bitterly did Miles Garrett resent the pillage which thinned his broad pastures of their choicest kine and horses; but unable, with such a retinue as he, unaided, could command, to contend against the numerous band which the rapparee kept constantly about him, he secretly arranged a plan by which he and two neighbouring gentlemen, Waller of Castle Waller, and Bourke, of Glinbally, were to meet upon the heights overlooking Muroe, and thus to concentrate their forces for pursuit on the next alarm. This was not long deferred. One fine autumn morning, the "herds" came running into the castle of Lisnamoe, with news that the outlaw and his men were driving off the cattle. Messengers were despatched in hot haste to those who had promised their assistance; and Miles Garrett and his men, making a long sweep to intercept the outlaw's retreat, halted at the head of Cappercullen Glen, overhanging the little village of Muroe. Here having dismounted, Garrett pursued the tangled and narrow path which wound along the edge of the precipitous glen, descending toward the village from which quarter the expected assistance was to arrive. Tradition says, that on turning a corner of this precarious and giddy path, he was encountered, face to face, by the rapparee himself. A brief and deadly struggle instantly ensued, in which, Garrett's footing failing him, the outlaw ran him through the body with his rapier. Whether the wound were a mortal one or not, the result was the same; for, standing upon the salient angle of the pathway—suspended a hundred feet and more above the craggy base, among whose rocks a swollen mountain stream was flashing and foaming—he reeled backward, and fell over the unguarded edge of the precipice. Headlong through the air he tumbled, and touching a branch in his fall, turned over, and so, head downward, reached the rocky bed of the torrent, where his skull was shattered like a gourd; and he lay huddled together among the stones and foam, until hours after, the ghastly corpse was found by children gathering "frahans" in the depths of that lonely dingle.

THE END.

Stirling, August 1891.

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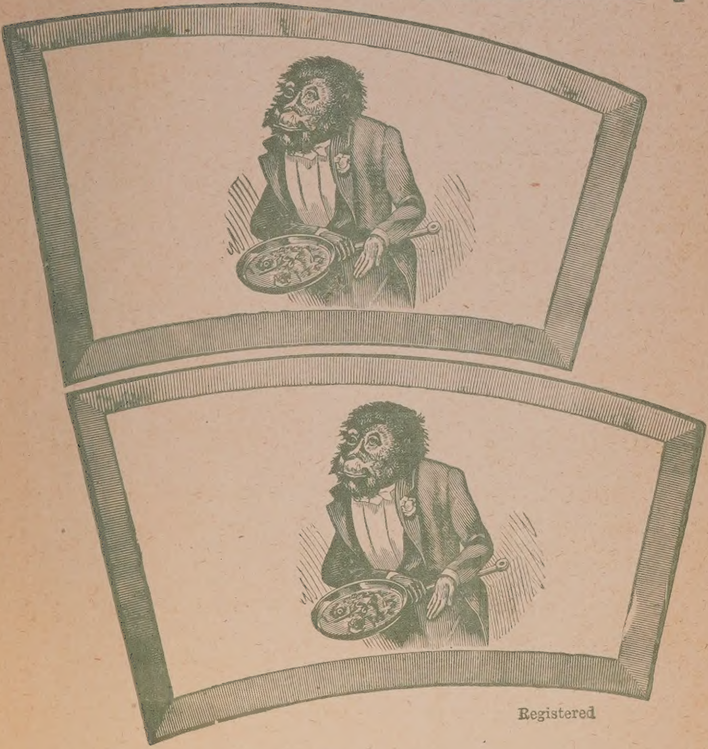

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